DK

RHS

ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

PRACTICAL HOUSE PLANT BOOK

CHOOSE THE BEST ▪ DISPLAY CREATIVELY
NURTURE & CARE ▪ 175 PLANT PROFILES

FRAN BAILEY & ZIA ALLAWAY

more books -> https://vk.com/ktchkainc

ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

PRACTICAL HOUSE PLANT BOOK

ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

PRACTICAL HOUSE PLANT BOOK

FRAN BAILEY
ZIA ALLAWAY
RHS CONSULTANT: CHRISTOPHER YOUNG

CONTENTS

6 Introduction

8 DESIGNING WITH HOUSE PLANTS

10 The art of house plant design
12 The rules of house plant design
14 Understanding scale
16 Designing with scale
18 Understanding shape
20 Designing with shape
22 Understanding colour
24 Designing with colour
26 Understanding texture
28 Designing with texture
30 Understanding containers
32 Designing with containers
36 Designing for bright light
38 Designing for low light
40 Designing for humidity
42 Designing for your space
44 Designing for wellbeing

50 HOUSE PLANT PROJECTS

52 Desertscape
56 Air plant stand
60 Macramé hanger
64 Open bottle terrarium
68 Willow climbing frame
72 Succulent wreath
76 Kokedama fern
80 Moss picture frame
84 Dry terrarium
88 Wood-mounted orchid
92 Living space divider
96 Propagation shelf

100 PLANT PROFILES
102 Bromeliads
106 Bulbous plants
110 Orchids
116 Other flowering plants
126 Ferns
130 Palms
134 Trailing and climbing plants
142 Carnivorous plants
146 Foliage plants
162 Cacti
166 Succulents
174 Air plants

176 CARE AND CULTIVATION
178 Buying a new house plant
180 Getting the light right
182 Check the temperature
184 How to water your house plants
188 Feeding your plants
190 Choosing compost for your plants
192 Pots and repotting
194 Keeping your plants in shape
196 How to make an orchid reflower
198 How to grow bulbs indoors
200 Propagate from stem cuttings
202 Propagate from leaf cuttings
204 Propagate with water
205 Propagate by dividing plants
206 Propagate from offsets
208 Propagate from seed
210 What's wrong with my plant?
212 Dealing with care-based problems
214 Dealing with common diseases
216 Dealing with common pests

220 Index

INTRODUCTION

Science has proved it: house plants make us happier and healthier. When studies tell us that plants can purify the air, lift our mood, and reduce our stress levels, we have every reason to fill our homes with wonderful, happiness-inducing plants of every shape, size, and colour.

With so many different varieties on offer, there is a plant – or twenty – to suit everyone: elegant, blossoming orchids; dinky little cacti and succulents; delicate trailing plants; floor-standing palms and foliage plants… the list goes on and on. It's hard to resist the urge to simply fill any and every available surface with a random assortment of greenery, but the best house plant displays are those that go that one step further: thoughtful, curated arrangements that can create a mood within a home, be it a cosy little oasis or a dramatic, architectural plant display.

As much as we may want to, we can't all turn our homes into a full-scale botanical garden. Instead, we need to be a little more inventive. Poor light? Look for unfussy foliage plants, such as cast iron plants or snake plants, that can survive in a shadier spot. No free surface space? Plant up a miniature garden inside a glass terrarium, or go all-out and create a hanging garden with macramé planters and kokedama.

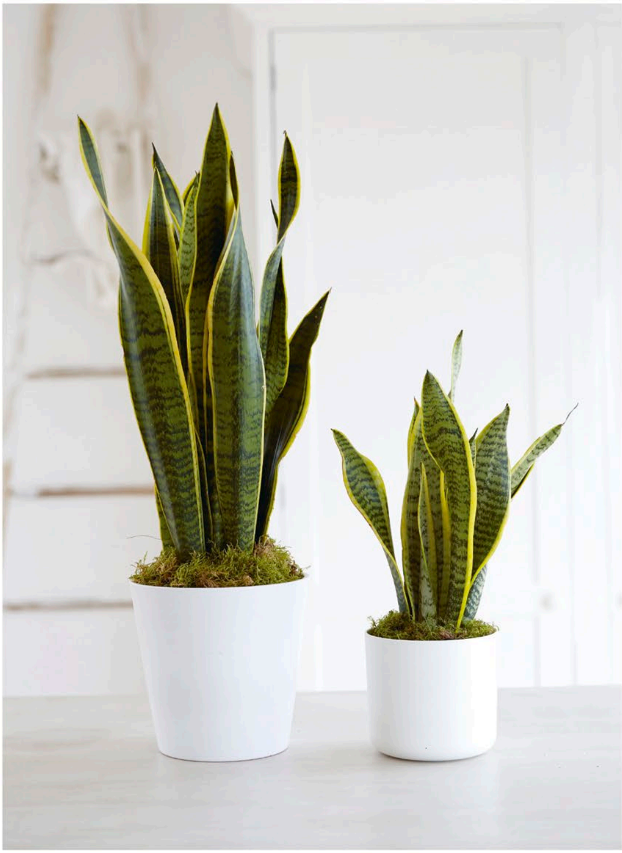
And, once you've designed your plant-filled home, how exactly do you keep the plants in peak condition? With this book, you'll be able to care for whichever plants you choose, keep them healthy and strong, and take cuttings to share with friends and family (or to grow your own collection). Treat your plants well and, no matter how large or small your collection, you'll be rewarded with an indoor garden you can enjoy for years to come.

DESIGNING WITH HOUSE PLANTS

THE ART OF HOUSE PLANT DESIGN

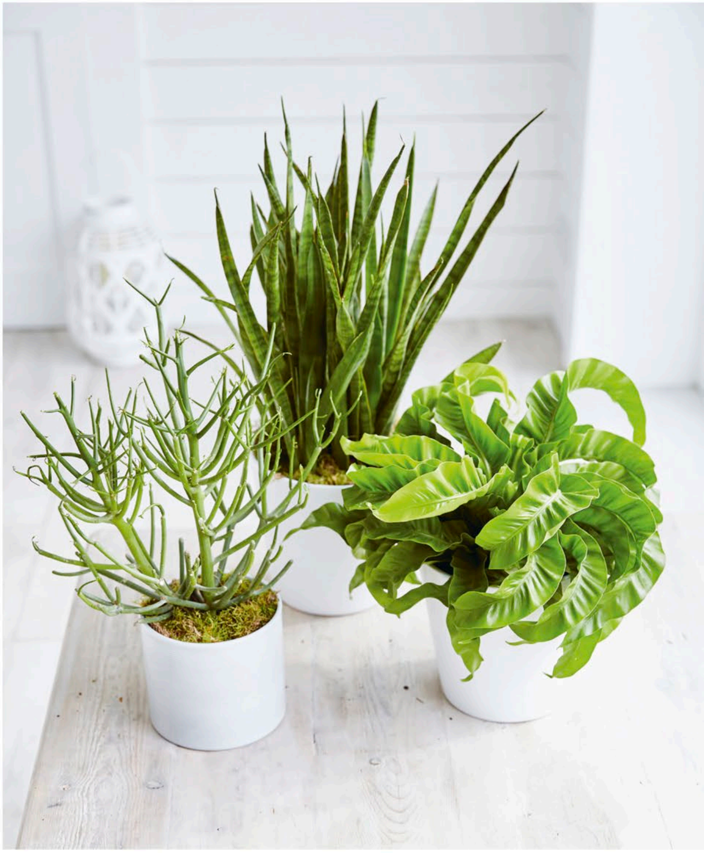
On its own, a plant is just a plant. Add another and it becomes a display. But what distinguishes a random selection of plants from a piece of design that can engage the eye and evoke the mood of your living space? The answer is to establish a visual connection between your plants, using the four design elements below.

SCALE pp14–17



Use size and proportion to create a display. Choose same-sized plants for balance and symmetry, or use plants of different sizes to draw the eye and create flow and movement.

SHAPE pp18–21



Choosing plants with similar shapes can create beautiful, natural patterns, while contrasting shapes can be used to sculpt displays with a sense of drama.

> *"Think of your design from every angle, as if it is a three-dimensional piece of living sculpture."*

COLOUR pp22-25

Colour can interact with colour to great effect. Use that interplay to find soft, harmonious shades or build a more vibrant, contrasting palette.

TEXTURE pp26-29

A plant's texture can have visual as well as tactile appeal, as it determines how the foliage interacts with the light. Mix and match different textures to add depth to a display.

THE RULES OF HOUSE PLANT DESIGN

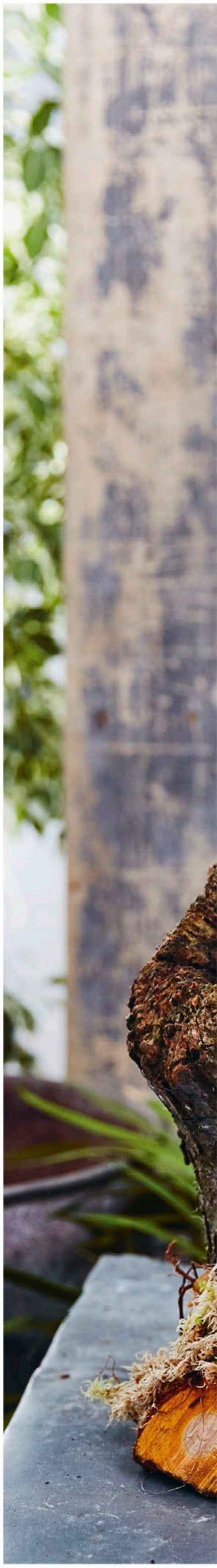
How you choose to design your house plant collection depends on your personal style, imagination, and the space you have available. With so many variables, the possibilities are almost endless, but for your displays to be successful, follow these key principles.

1 CARE COMES BEFORE STYLE

A healthy plant is a beautiful plant. When designing for a particular space, always choose plants that you know will thrive in the light, temperature, and humidity conditions provided by that space. There is no point taking the time to arrange the perfect display only to watch the plants within it begin to wilt and die because they are unhappy in their location.

2 THINK NATURAL

Be inspired by nature. Consider where and how a plant would grow in the wild, and try to emulate that in your display. So, if a plant thrives in on a damp, semi-shaded forest floor, provide it with a position that offers a similar environment. If it trails from high branches, place it in a hanging container. If it grows aerial roots without compost, build that into your display. Whatever its natural circumstances, use them as inspiration.



3 HARMONY AND CONTRAST

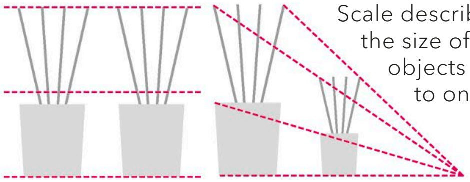
Strike a balance between harmonious and contrasting design features. Familiarise yourself with the four key elements of design (see pp10–11), and harmonize or contrast them as needed to achieve the effect you want. Harmony can create a balanced, unified appearance, while contrast will add interest and dynamism to a display.

UNDERSTANDING SCALE

To put it simply, scale refers to the relative size and proportion of objects. A plant may be large or small, but its relationship with neighbouring plants or objects is what defines its scale. Proportion is key to any successful design: a tiny cactus and a weeping fig, for example, would be totally out of scale and proportion with each other. Get the scale right, and you can create interesting relationships between the plants in your display.

WHAT IS SCALE?

Scale describes your plants' sizes in comparison with one another. It is closely related to proportion, which describes the size of your plants within an overall display. Plants of a similar size are harmonious in scale, while those of different heights contrast in scale. Scale is relative: any two plants can share the same contrast of scale, provided that they maintain the same proportions.



Scale describes the size of two objects in relation to one another

Harmony of scale *Contrast of scale*

HARMONY OF SCALE

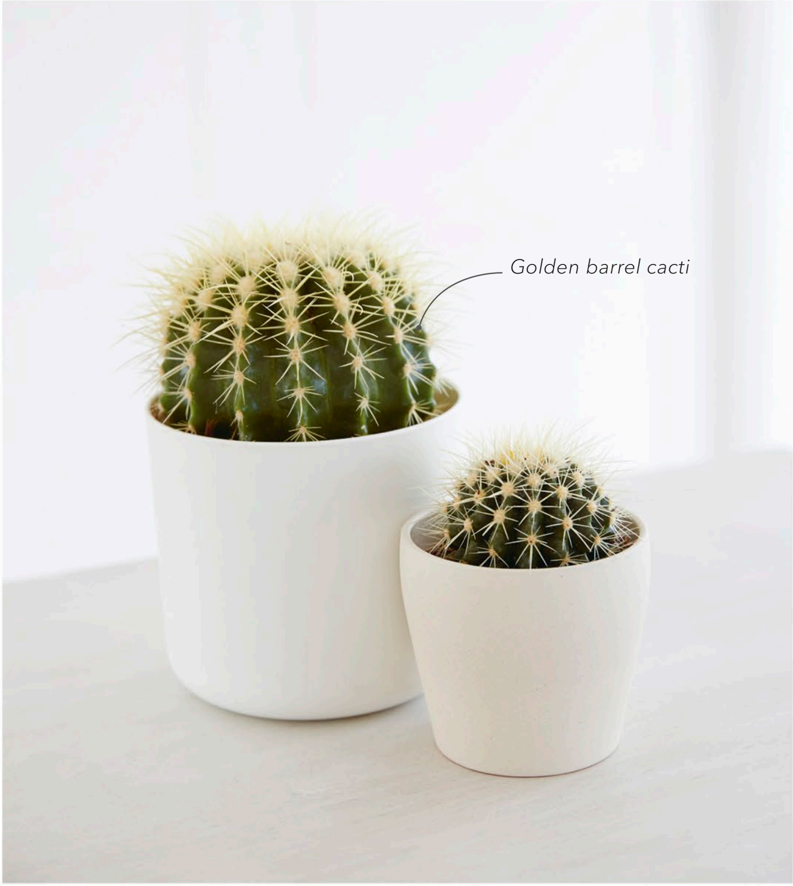
Choosing and grouping together plants of uniform or nearly uniform scale results in a classic, highly ordered display. Repetition of scale and proportion creates a harmonious pattern and offers a sense of unity and simplicity. Harmony can become dull if the repetition is overdone, but in moderation it offers a sense of order and rhythm.

Fiddle-leaved figs

> *"How do your house plants measure up against one another?"*

CONTRAST OF SCALE

When plants are in proportion but of different scales, the eye is led from one to the other and the relationship is less static, and more dynamic, than thatof a harmonious display. There is a sense of movement, going from small up to large, drawing the eye to a focal point in the grouping but maintaining proportion so that the relationship isn't broken.



> *“Keep the scale of your plant display in proportion with your space to create equilibrium.”*

DESIGNING WITH SCALE

What effect do you wish to create in your space? Do you want a formal pattern of repetition and harmony, or an informal, eye-catching arrangement that creates contrast and movement? You can lead the eye up or down, screen or define a space, or instantly introduce formality or informality simply with the proportion of your plant choices.

DESIGNING WITH HARMONY OF SCALE

Harmony can reinforce pattern, so use plants of the same scale to echo and exaggerate existing patterns within your living space: the symmetry of a windowsill, the staggered surface of a flight of stairs. Maintaining the same scale across a display while varying other design elements creates a harmonious pattern that unites your plants.

1 The uniform scale of these three kentia palms allows the display to echo the outline of the steps.

2 This cluster of three very different trailing plants is given cohesion by its harmony of scale (left to right: donkey’s tail, string of pearls, and mistletoe cactus).

DESIGNING WITH CONTRAST OF SCALE

Grouping plants of different sizes offers a chance to manipulate the eye and generate a sense of movement. Perhaps you want to sweep along a windowsill or table, or conjure an impression of height, or lead the eye into a particular space. Use contrast of scale to create a sight-line between your plants and draw attention to a focal point within your grouping.

1 A sequence of ever-larger bromeliads creates a line of visual interest along a windowsill, with a smaller one at the end just to playfully challenge the order.

2 The extreme contrast of scale between the little missionary plant and the imposing Swiss cheese plant is given cohesion by the mid-sized fiddle-leaved fig, which unifies and balances the display.

1

2

1

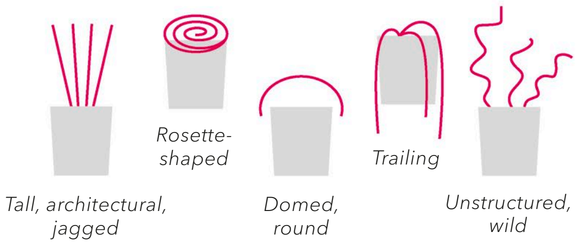
2

UNDERSTANDING **SHAPE**

While every plant has its own particular growth habit, most will conform to a range of shapes that you can use to sculpt an overall line or outline for your display. Depending on how you arrange them, you can create a range of effects, from a dynamic sweep to an ordered, symmetrical pattern.

WHAT IS SHAPE?

Every house plant is unique, shaped as much by its environment as by its natural form, and no two plants will ever share an identical outline. Nevertheless, certain shapes tend to occur regularly throughout a range of house plant types. Use these as a starting point when identifying your plant's outline.



HARMONY OF SHAPE

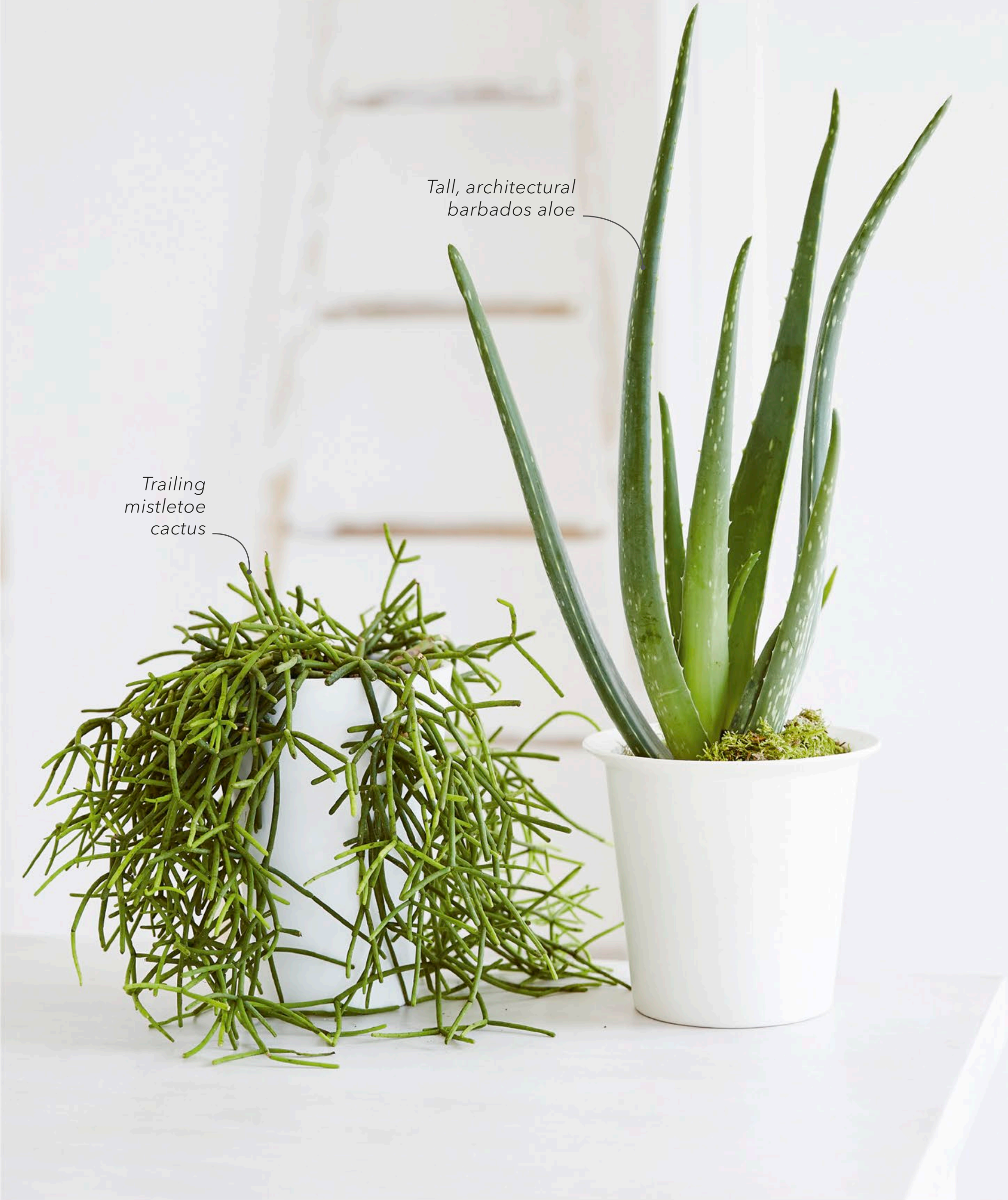
A row of the same plant varieties, or of plants that have a similar shape, creates a harmonious pattern. The repetition of shape provides a sense of order and symmetry. No one plant may dominate, so the overall effect is of unity and simplicity, with all plants in the group having a similar visual weight.

Tall, architectural pencil cactus

CONTRAST OF SHAPE

Using a variety of shapes creates a sense of movement and draws the attention along the display. Diverse shapes can be used to create a sense of adventure and tension, with the visual weight being carried across the group according to how the shapes of the different plants interact.

Tall, architectural snake plant


Tall, architectural barbados aloe
Trailing mistletoe cactus

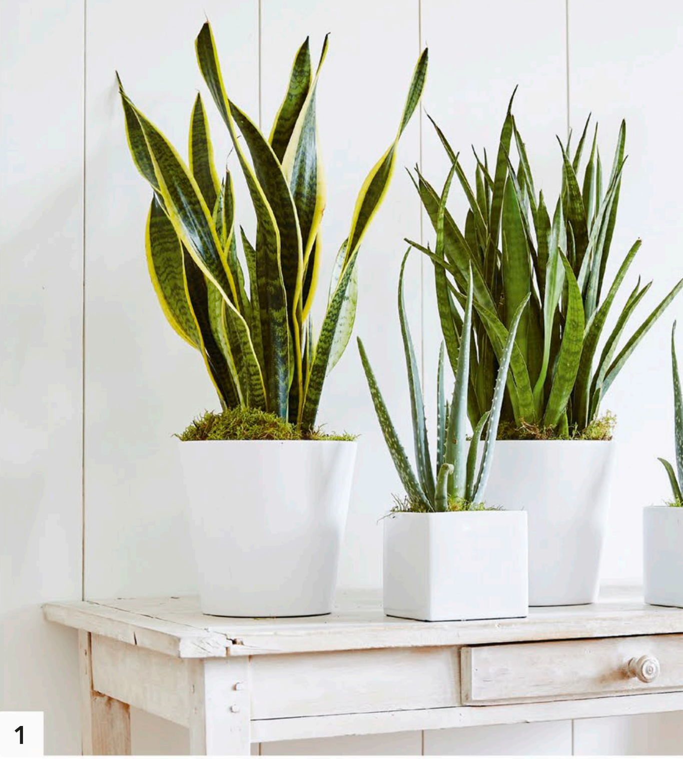
> *“Reposition your plants a few times until you’re happy that they create a natural, flowing movement within the display.”*

DESIGNING WITH **SHAPE**

Use the shapes of your plants to construct and sculpt a display that offers real visual impact in your living space. Establish patterns by repeating one or two strong shape types, or sculpt a unique outline from plants with distinct forms that will carry the eye through the design. To keep your displays controlled, prune them back regularly into shape (see pp194–95).

DESIGNING WITH HARMONY OF SHAPE

Repetition of shape across a symmetrical design creates a sense of impact and order. Use plants with strong, clean outlines, such as tall or domed shapes, and limit the display to just one or two plant varieties to establish a sense of order and control.



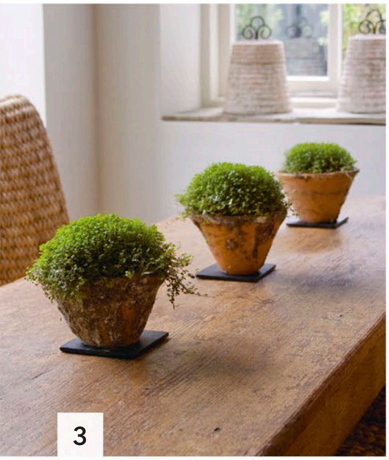
1

2

1 These snake plants and aloes share the same tall, architectural shape, creating a strong, symmetrical display.

2 Despite contrast of colour, the matching forms of these begonias unify the display.

3 The repeated domes of mind-your-own-business plants draw the eye along the table.



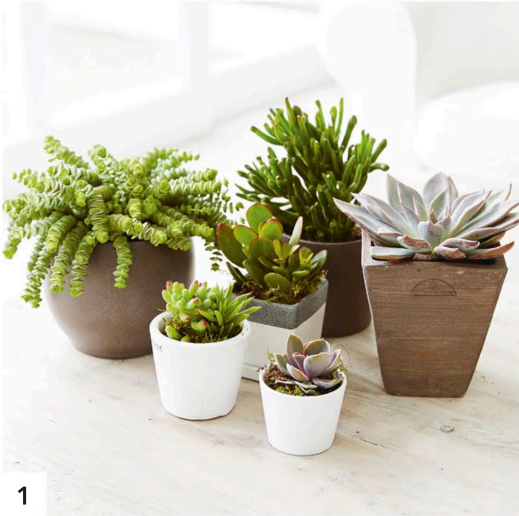
3

DESIGNING WITH CONTRAST OF SHAPE

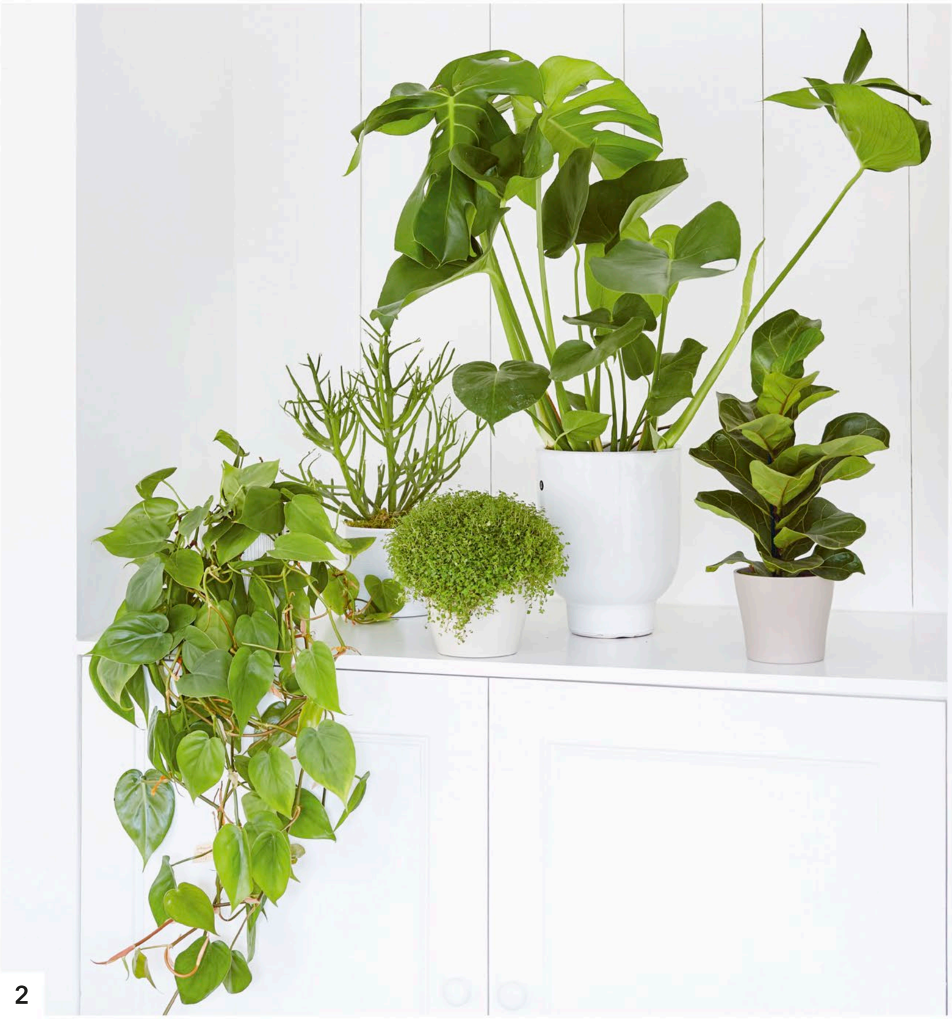
An asymmetrical display built from multiple shape types can be used to redefine a space. Use different plants' unique visual features to create a flowing, organic design, but keep it controlled; the outline should lead the eye across the display without any obvious, irregular gaps that could break the flow.

1 The central cluster of mini succulents nestled within the larger trio builds into a varied but strongly united grouping.

2 The contrasting forms of the tall Swiss cheese plant and trailing devil's ivy create a flowing, asymmetrical design bound together by the mid-sized plants in the group.



1



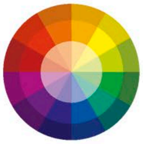
2

UNDERSTANDING COLOUR

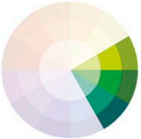
Within Nature there are many different colours, shades, and tones for you to work with. Colours have emotional properties too: greens, the predominant colour of plant design, are restful and reassuring; reds and oranges suggest warmth and energy; white evokes purity and calm. Use them to set the mood for your space.

WHAT IS COLOUR?

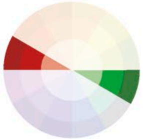
Colours in isolation behave differently from colours in combination, and the colour wheel shows how those relationships work. In between the primary colours of red, blue, and yellow lie all the shades they make in combination (so, for example, green sits between blue and yellow, which combine to make green). Towards the centre are progressively lighter tints, while as the circle progresses outwards, the shades get darker.



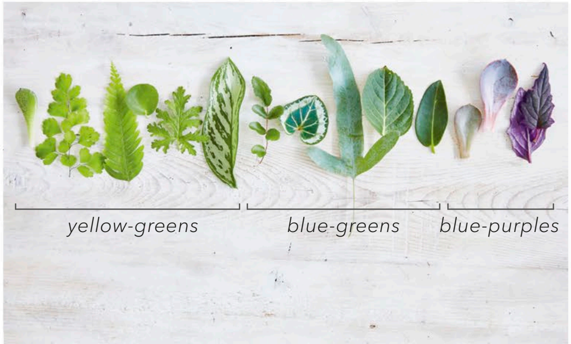
The colour wheel shows all colours, along with their hues, tints, tones, and shades.



Adjacent colours work in harmony, as they share the same range of hues and tones.



Opposing colours on the wheel can create contrast and vibrancy.



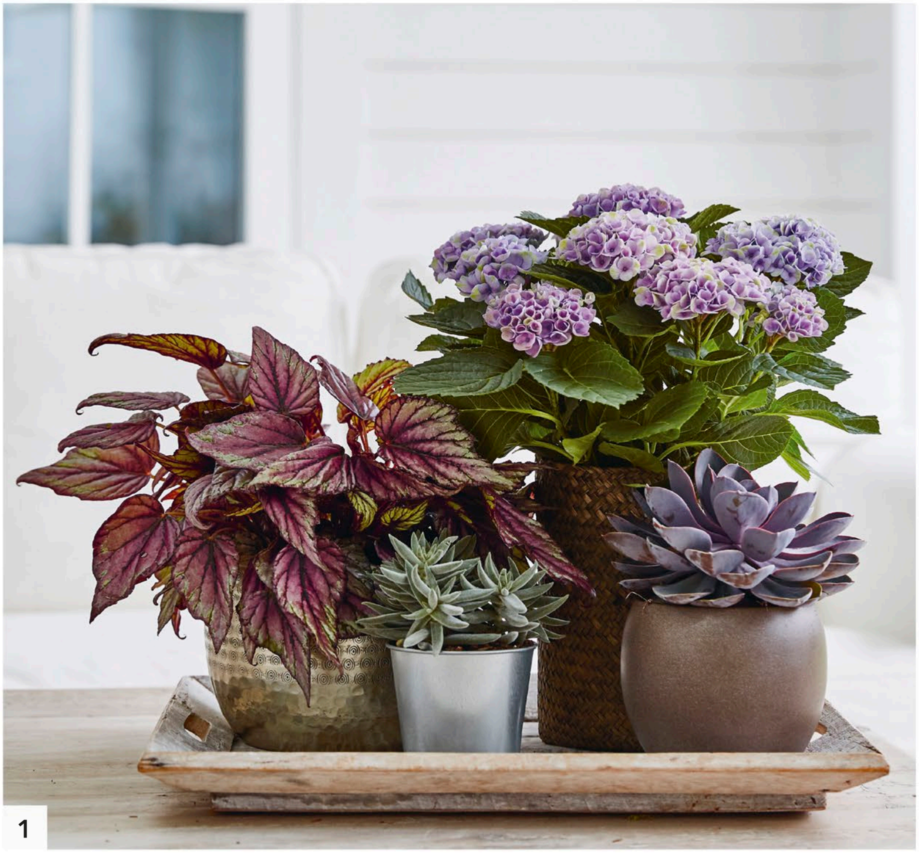
HARMONY OF COLOUR

Restricting your palette to different shades of the same colour creates a sense of order and control. Limiting an arrangement to such a narrow section of the colour wheel can also provide an air of calm and tranquility. Mixing in colours that lie adjacent on the colour wheel, such as soft blues or gentle yellows, changes the rhythm but doesn't unbalance the overall equilibrium. The colours still harmonise and blend with each other, maintaining the simplicity.

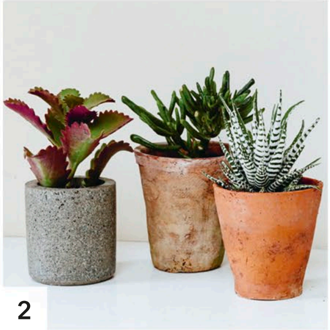
CONTRAST OF COLOUR

Using colours from opposite sides of the colour wheel, such as red and green or yellow and purple, instantly adds energy to a display. For a more subtle effect, try working with three colours evenly spaced around the colour wheel (green, orange, and purple, for instance); while still contrasting, the palette is not as high-energy as a two-colour, directly opposing contrast would be.

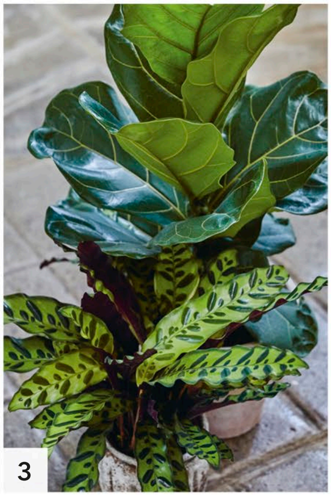
> *“Nature offers a wonderful variety of colours from which you can create your own artist’s palette.”*



1



2



3

DESIGNING WITH COLOUR

Colour evokes emotion, so design your display according to the mood you want to create. For a sense of serenity, try greens and whites; for a vibrant display, incorporate fiery oranges and reds. Cool colours can also impart a sense of space, while warm colours may suggest cosiness.

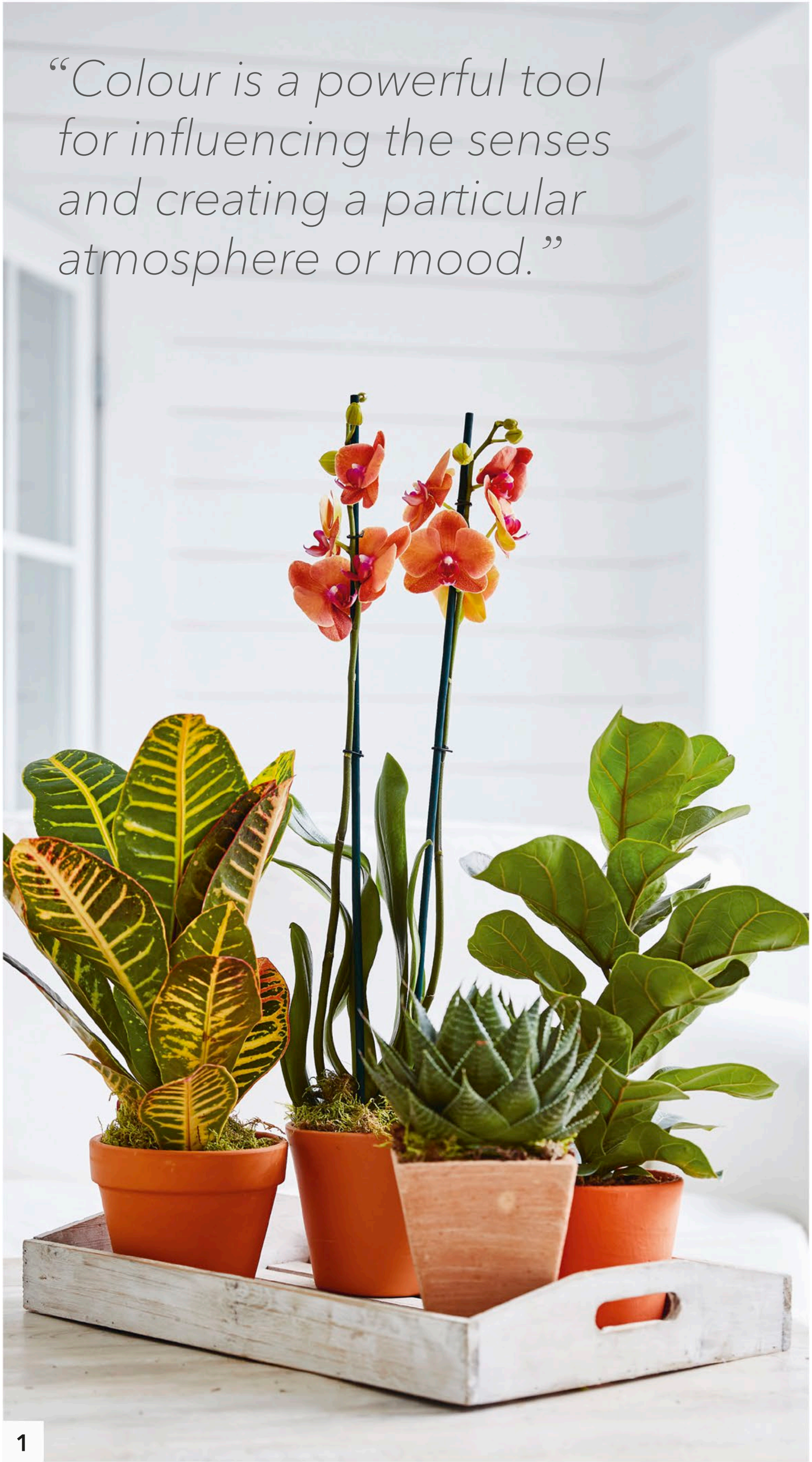
DESIGNING WITH HARMONY OF COLOUR

For a calm, ordered arrangement, plants need to blend gently with one another colour-wise. A strict colour palette of greens is refined, but you may need to vary other elements to avoid a dull display. Broadening your palette to adjacent colours allows a wider range of moods to be conjured, while retaining serenity and order. Cool hues generally suggest a sense of space.

1 A palette of purple flowers and foliage harmonizes this group of different plants, setting a gentle yet welcoming mood.

2 This little succulent display creates a muted range of greens, from the red-green kalanchoe to the white-speckled haworthia.

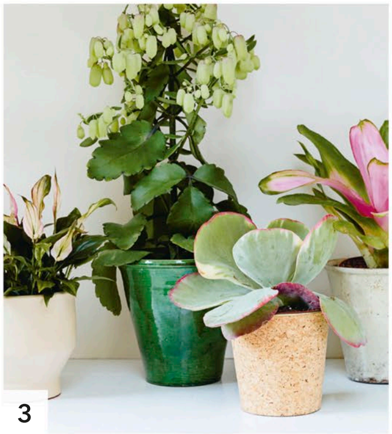
3 The rattlesnake plant's variegated green leaves (left) offer some interest when paired with the fiddle-leaved fig behind it.



> *“Colour is a powerful tool for influencing the senses and creating a particular atmosphere or mood.”*

1

2



3

DESIGNING WITH CONTRAST OF COLOUR

Warm colours can make spaces appear more intimate. As they contrast directly with green, they also add drama to a plant display. Use them to draw the eye in to your display, or to create bold, vibrant relationships between your plants.

1 The vivid orange moth orchid picks up on the terracotta pots, and stands out as the focal point in the display.

2 Make an air plant display pop with a few red-coloured varieties.

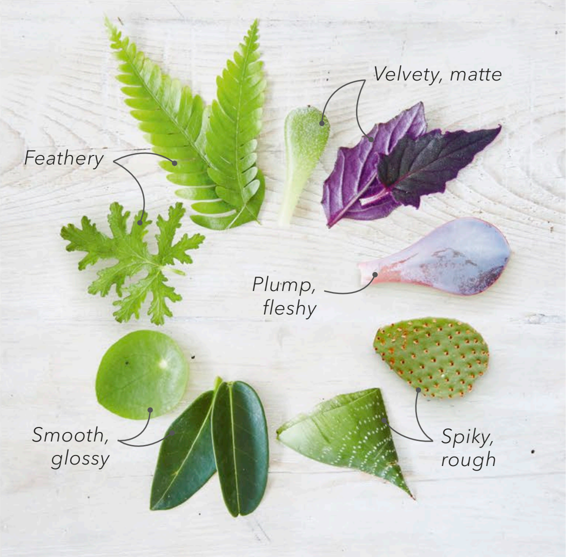
3 Pinks and greens contrast in this delicate yet colourful design.

UNDERSTANDING TEXTURE

While it can be a subtle design feature, texture offers a vital sensory element in a display. A plant's surface type determines how it interacts with light and shadow, which gives it a unique presence: for example, velvety leaves have a soft, matte appearance, while smooth, glossy foliage presents a crisp, bright, clean-cut image.

WHAT IS TEXTURE?

Texture describes a plant's foliage, and the effect it creates when interacting with light and shadow. While it adds a seemingly tactile dimension, texture should primarily remain a visual design element: some plants, like the bunny ears cactus, may look soft, but you would not want to touch those fine spikes.



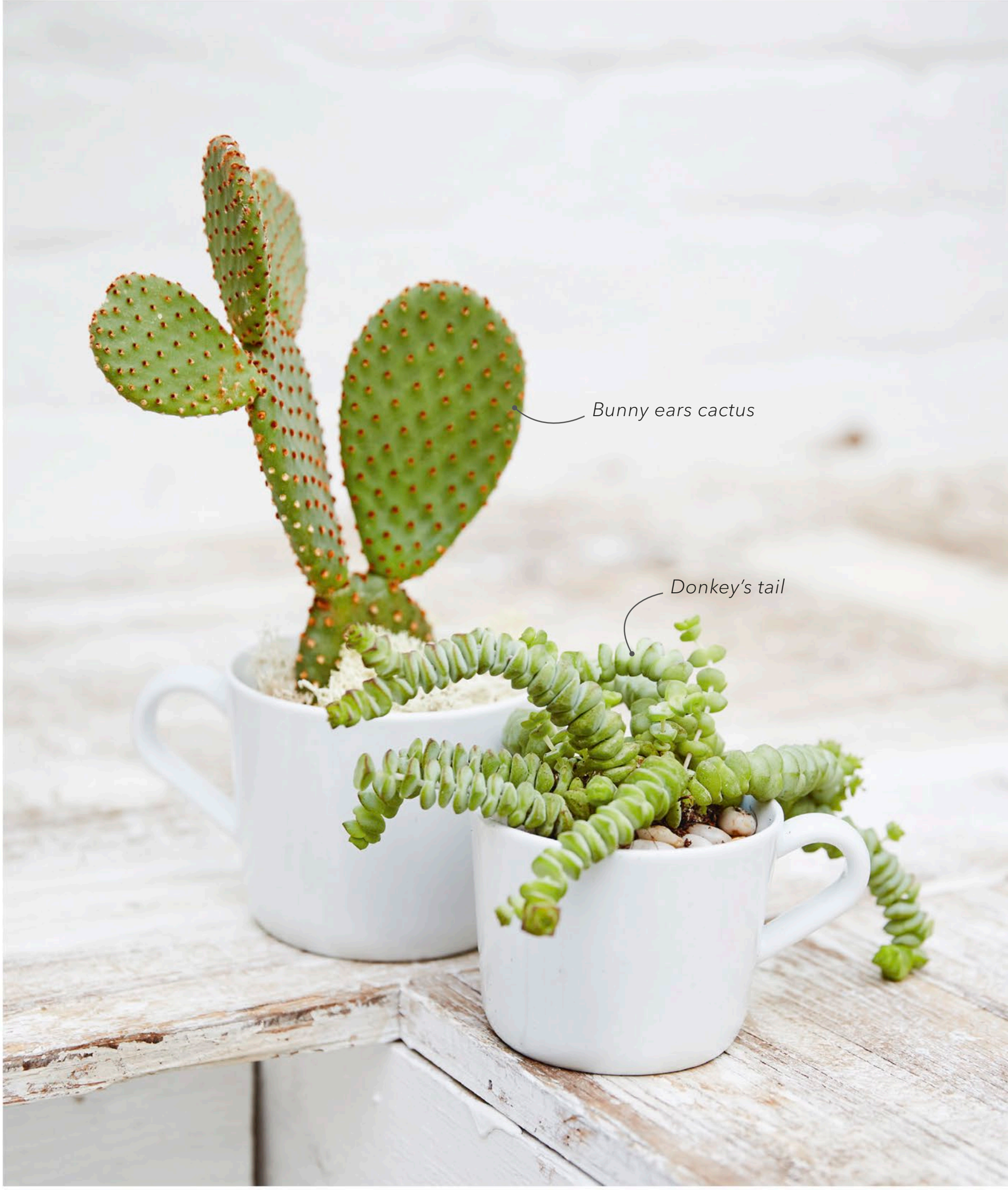
HARMONY OF TEXTURE

When similar-textured plants are grouped together, the quality of light and shadow across their foliage is consistent, creating a relationship between the plants despite any other visual differences, such as colour or size. This relationship unifies the display, creating a balanced whole and imparting a sense of simplicity.

Mistletoe cactus

> *"Texture adds another dimension to your display through the visual qualities of the plant's leaves."*

Mind-your-own-business


Bunny ears cactus
Donkey's tail

CONTRAST OF TEXTURE

Strong textural contrasts create drama and interest. The greater the contrast, the greater the emphasis on each plant's individual presence: the clean, crisp foliage of a glossy-leaved plant versus the wild, informal appearance of feathered leaves, for instance, or a succulent's plump, fleshy leaves versus the spiky prickles of a cactus.

> *“Light, feathery foliage carries less visual weight than denser, solid-leaved plants, so use more in a display if you want the different textures to appear balanced.”*

DESIGNING WITH TEXTURE

Texture is the key to evoking mood in a display. Velvety, smooth, feathery, spiky: your choice of textures will set the tone for your arrangement, and the mood of the space your plants will occupy. How you then reinforce that texture through harmony, or contrast it with a different texture, gives your design its focus and emphasis.

DESIGNING WITH HARMONY OF TEXTURE

When a group of plants interact with light in the same way – absorbing or reflecting it, offering similar textural patterns of light and dark – there is a unity achieved that brings the composition together as a whole. A thoughtful combination of similar textures offset by other contrasting elements creates interest, although too much repetition creates monotony.

1 Pairing the structurally different, but equally glossy, fern arum (left) and radiator plant (right) builds a strong relationship that is reinforced by similarly glossy containers.

2 The *Myrtillocactus* (left) and rattail cactus (right) contrast in almost every regard, but their matching spiky textures offers a point of harmony.

3 A seemingly random sprawling group of air plants is given unity by the similarity of their textures.

4 Texture can harmonize a contrasting colour palette, linking the two purple velvet plants with the *Echeveria* (left) and *Kalanchoe* (right).

DESIGNING WITH CONTRAST OF TEXTURE

Bringing diverse textures together builds excitement and tension, as each texture brings a different mood to the display. The relationship between the different textures needs to be carefully balanced, however, in order not to simply suggest chaos. The light and shadow should work across the design in such a way that the eye is drawn to the contrasts but can also see the rhythm in them.

1 Fleshy, plump succulents contrast interestingly with the pretty fronds of moss; the voluptuousness of the succulents is accentuated by the delicacy of the carpet and reindeer mosses.

2 The dominant, rougher texture of the golden polypody’s velvety leaves is sandwiched between the softer, more elegant Boston fern (left) and the fine foliage of the delta maidenhair fern (right).

1

2

3

4

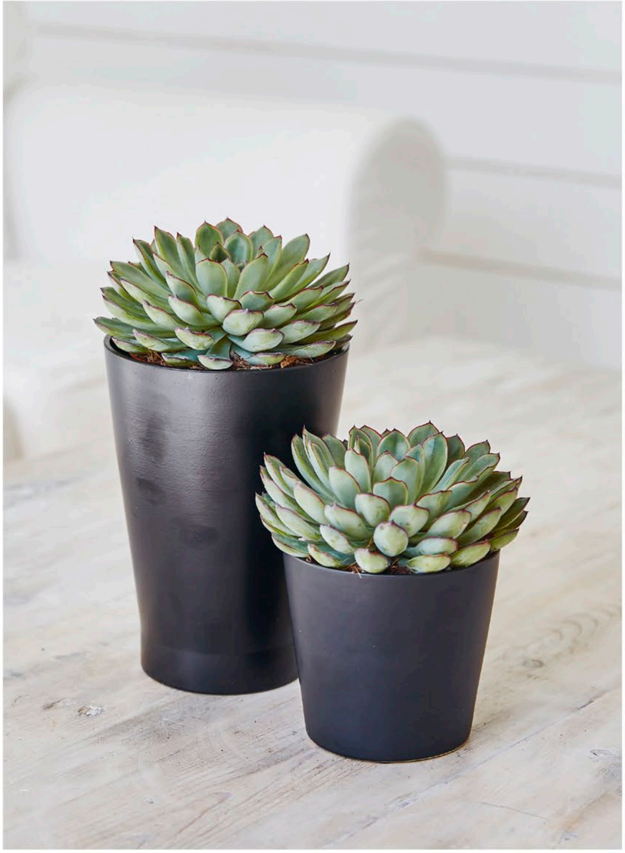
1

2

UNDERSTANDING CONTAINERS

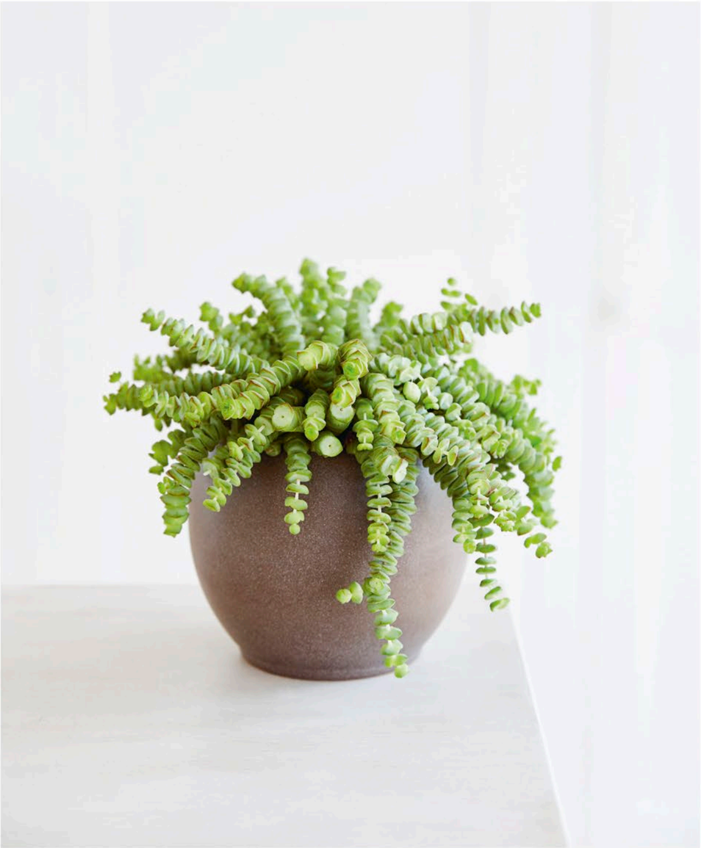
An integral part of any house plant arrangement is the choice of pots. While neutral containers can offer a unifying backdrop for your plants, a bold container choice that emphasises one or more design elements can become a focal point in itself, highlighting your plants' best features and tying them in with the surrounding environment.

SCALE



Containers that play with scale and proportion can change the relationship between identical plants, while matching containers of the same scale can unify a group of different plants.

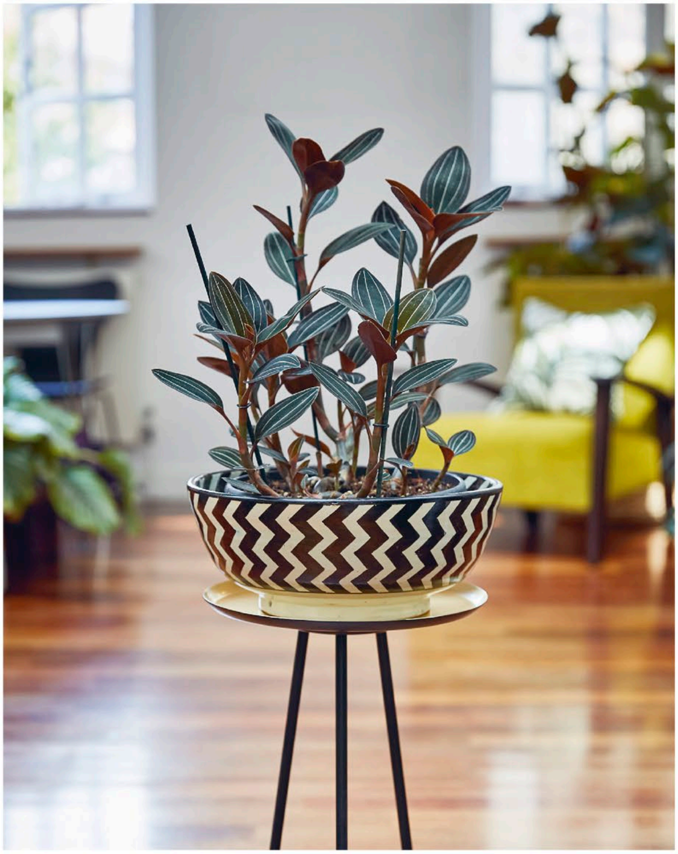
SHAPE



A container's shape can harmonize or contrast with your plant's growing habit. It can echo and accentuate the natural shape of the plant, or contrast with it to create interest or drama.

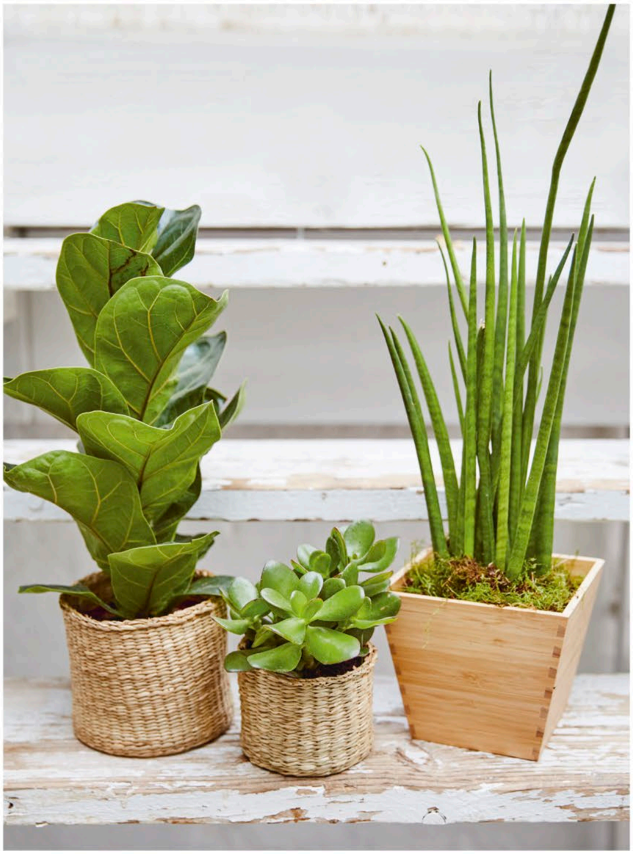
> *"Like the accessories that tie together your favourite outfit, containers add those all-important finishing touches to your house plant design."*

COLOUR



Colour and pattern on a container can be used to highlight features in your plant. Stripes can echo stripes, colour can pick up on colour, highlighting what may have been a subtle accent on a plant.

TEXTURE



The surface of your container can complement the texture of your plant's foliage, or directly contrast with it, in order to play on the differences and the sensory interest of the display.

"For an eye-catching display, hunt out interesting and unusual containers in vintage shops."

DESIGNING WITH CONTAINERS

Be adventurous with your container choice. Almost anything can be used as a container or outer sleeve: as well as regular pots and terrariums, try repurposing old household items for conversation-starting display.

1 This rustic white tray harmonizes with the dusty appearance of the air plants it displays.

2 A glass terrarium can display an entire miniature garden, allowing it to be admired from every angle.

3 These glass baubles act as tiny hanging terrariums for the ferns and trailing plants within.

4 Try planting spring bulbs in glass jars to show off their root systems as they grow.

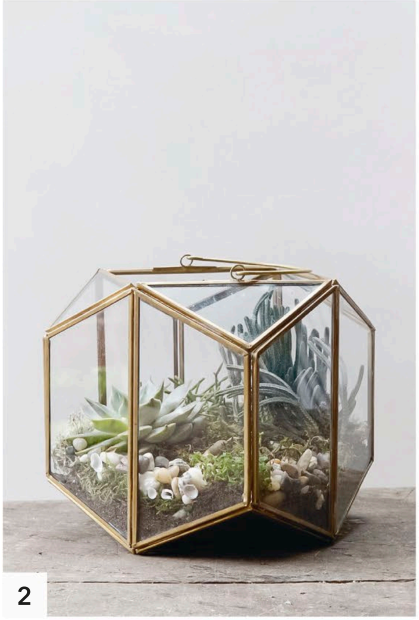
5 Add drainage holes to the base of a clean food tin to create a statement cacti container.

6 A vintage jug makes a curious decorative sleeve for an orchid.

7 Wall-mounted containers turn these two staghorn ferns into living pieces of art.

8 These classic, modern containers directly contrast with the appearance of the echeverias.

1



2

3

4

5

6

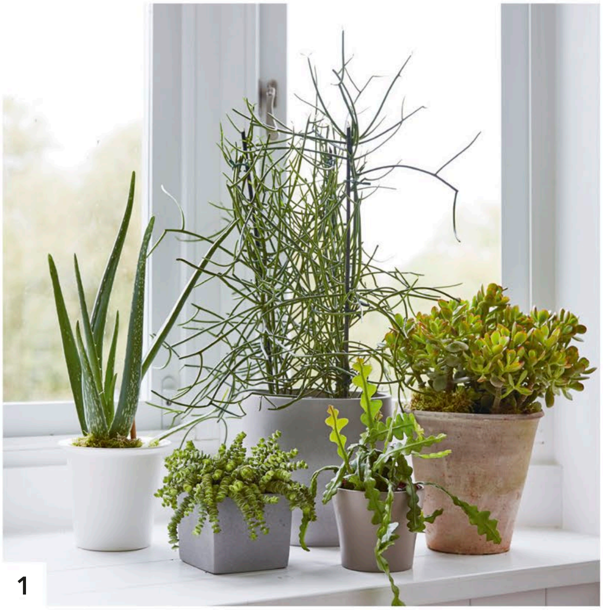
8

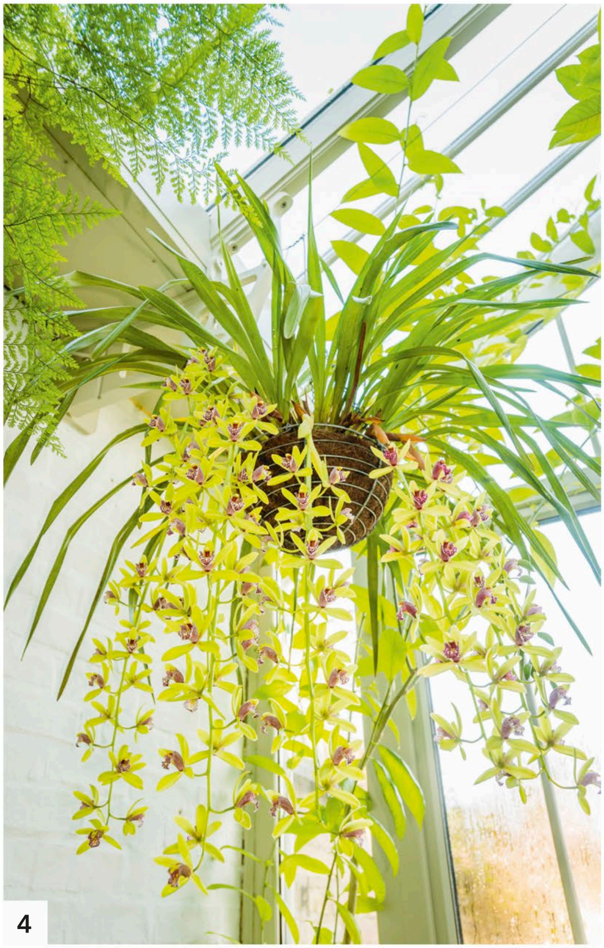
7

Use your imagination With a little creative thinking, almost anything can be used for a display. This mismatched collection of glasses harmonizes with the succulents' foliage colours, and even shows off their compost and roots.

DESIGNING FOR BRIGHT LIGHT

If you're lucky enough to have lots of bright light in your home (see pp180–81), take advantage of the possibilities by designing stunning displays of sun-loving plants. Fill up an empty window from top to bottom with lush greenery, or create a hanging garden beneath a skylight. Just remember to make sure your chosen plants can cope with the level of sunlight they are exposed to (see Plant Profiles, pp100–75).


1


4

1 Combine a mixture of sun-loving plants of different sizes and shapes to create a windowsill display that makes the most of the bright light levels.

2 Propagated cuttings (see pp96–99) make a pretty and practical display in a bright area out of direct sun.

3 Hang vanda orchids (see p115) in front of a window to show off their roots, which can be displayed without compost.

4 In the wild, many orchids trail from high tree branches. Echo that by hanging them beneath a skylight, out of direct sun.

5 This colourful, multi-level orchid display fills a small window with blooms.

6 A hanging herb planter makes practical use of a kitchen window.

2

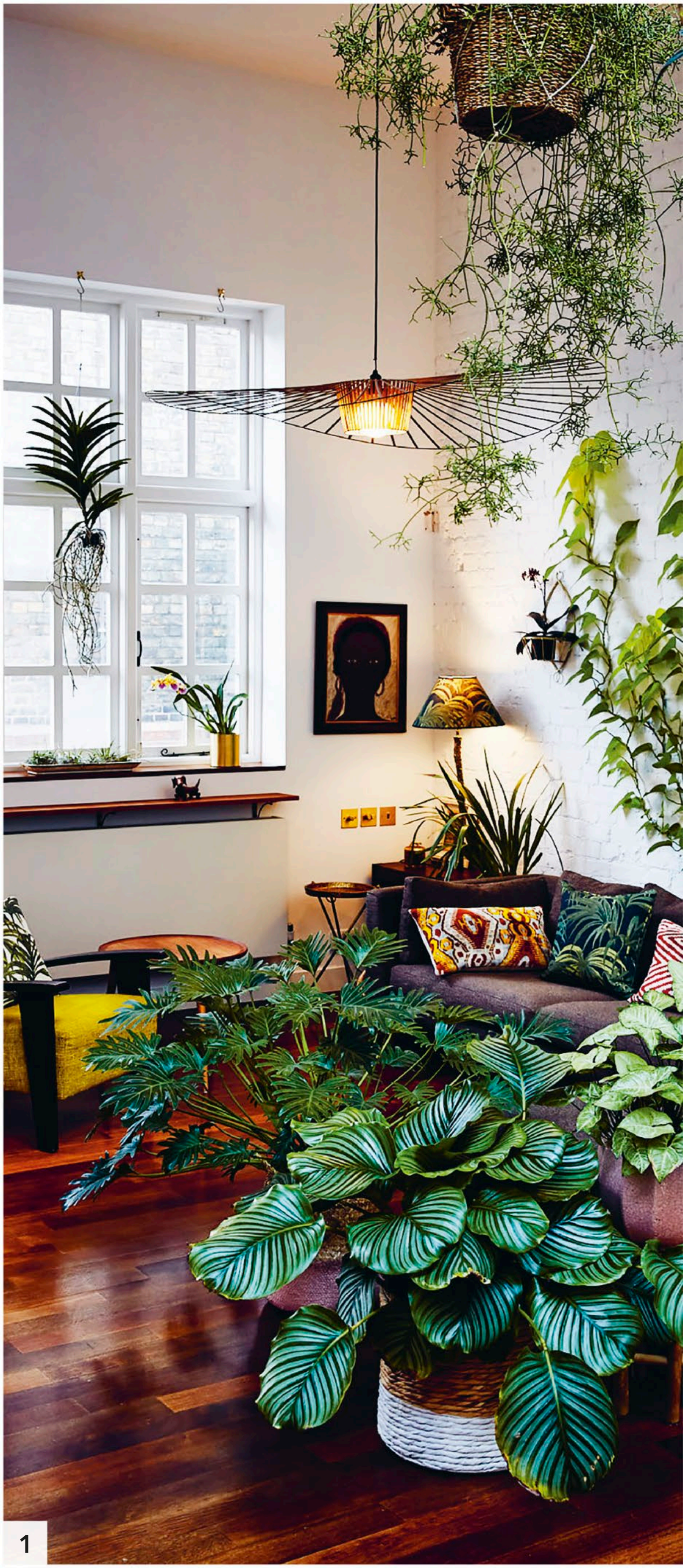
3

5

6

DESIGNING FOR LOW LIGHT

Don't despair if your home does not receive a lot of bright daylight. Many plants prefer filtered sun, and some can even thrive away in areas of light shade (see pp180–81), since many of them would naturally grow in the low light beneath a forest canopy. Use this as inspiration when designing for low light, adding touches of lush greenery to evoke a woodland landscape in your living space.



1 Large, glossy-leaved foliage and climbing plants trained up walls brings a touch of the jungle to an urban home.

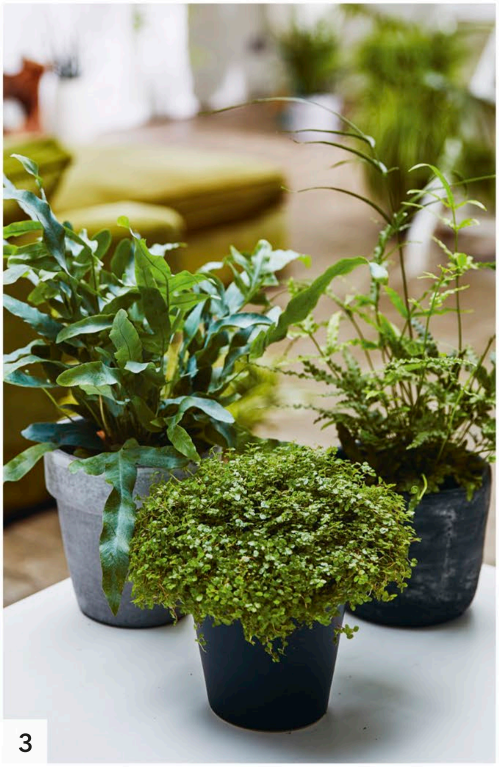
2 Orchids that would naturally grow under dense forest canopies, such as this moth orchid, are well-suited to low light.

3 This small display of woodland plants will thrive in filtered sun/light shade (L–R: golden polypody, mind-your-own-business, Cretan brake fern).

4 Keep a bowl of damp pebbles near a collection of lush feathery forest ferns to keep them looking hydrated and fresh (L–R: crocodile fern, Boston fern).

5 Add flashes of colour to a low-light display by using flowering plants and variegated leaves (such as those of a polka-dot begonia, centre).

2



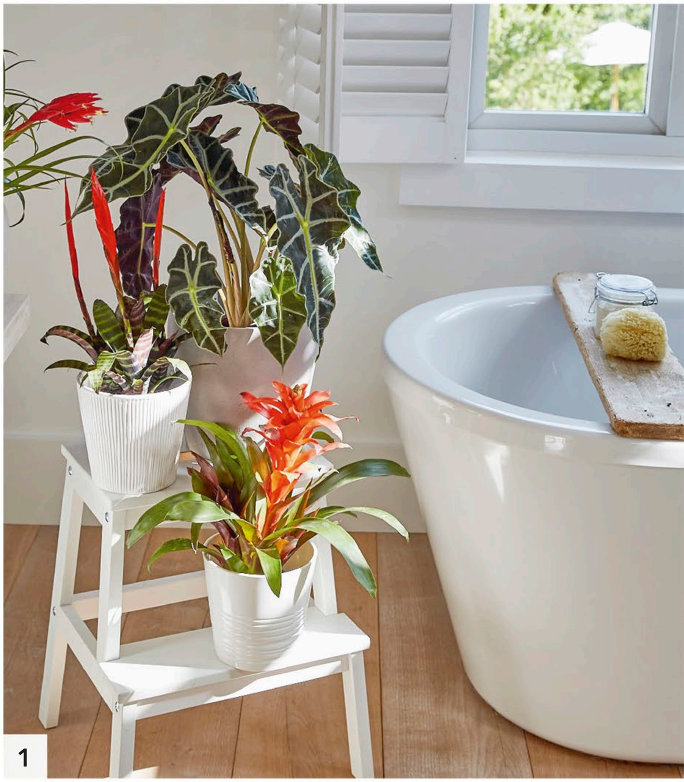
3

4

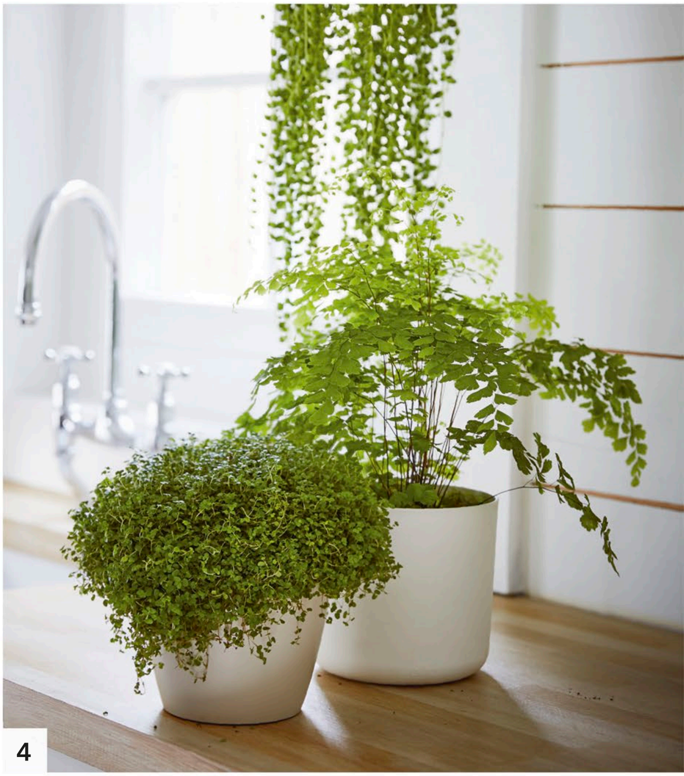
5

DESIGNING FOR HUMIDITY

Most moisture-loving plants need regular misting and care, but what if you could display them in a ready-made humid space in which they could thrive? Use humidity to your advantage and be adventurous in your designs: dare to turn a kitchen into a jungle, or take over the bathroom with ambitious living walls and displays, where the steam will naturally mist humidity-lovers like ferns, bromeliads, and air plants.



1



4

1 Contrast the bright foliage of a bathroom bromeliad display with the addition of a humidity-loving Amazonian elephant's ear.

2 Assemble a kokedama string garden (see pp76–79) in humid areas of your home (L–R: Boston fern, spider plant, Cretan brake fern).

3 A trailing string of hearts plant adds a touch of atmosphere to a bathroom counter.

4 Use a humid spot to keep feathery foliage lush and fresh (L–R: mind-your-own-business, delta maidenhair fern, and string of pearls).

5 Since air plants draw moisture from the air, display them in a humid room in a wire frame or on a stand (see pp56–59).

6 Carnivorous plants love moist, boggy environments, so will thrive in a humid space.

2

3

5

6

DESIGNING FOR SPACE

Any living space, large or small, offers plenty of opportunities to get creative with house plant design. If you have no free surfaces, create a colony of hanging plants above your head. If you have bare walls, swap artwork for architectural displays of plant-filled shelves. With a little imagination, you will find more and more ways to turn any space into an indoor oasis.

1

4

1 If you want to hang non-trailing plants from the ceiling, use decorative containers that will look attractive from below. Hang climbing plants from rafters, if your home has them, to allow the foliage to grow up and along the beams.

2 Climbing plants aren't just for the garden; you can also train them to indoor walls to fill an empty space.

3 Fill a tall set of shelves with a curated selection of plants to create your own "green library".

4 Assemble a lush collection of hanging plants to create a "living curtain" of foliage.

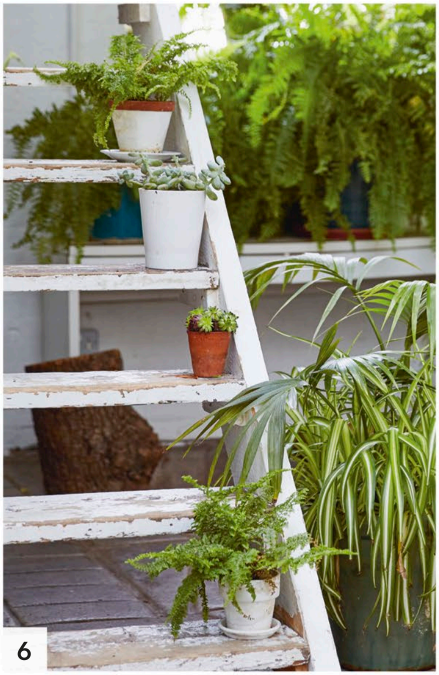
5 Create a miniature garden in a tiny space using a terrarium (see pp64–67 and pp84–87). Display it at eye level, where the detail can be closely admired.

6 Almost any space is up for grabs when designing plant displays. A staircase, for example, shows off your plants at eye level and from above as you walk down.

2

3

5



6

DESIGNING FOR WELLBEING

There is far more to house plant design than visual beauty. Plants aren't just decorative objects: they are capable of lowering our stress levels, filling our homes with fragrance, and even ridding the air we breathe of harmful pollutants (see pp46–47). Follow the advice on these pages to make the most of these benefits.

HOW HOUSE PLANTS HELP

Multiple studies have shown that there are tangible psychological benefits to keeping plants in indoor spaces such as homes and offices. After spending time living and working alongside plants, those taking part in the studies found that, on average:

- their mood levels improved
- they felt less stressed
- they felt more productive
- their attention span improved (in some studies)

DESIGNING FOR MINDFULNESS

Modern life doesn't always offer enough opportunities to enjoy the Great Outdoors, especially for those of us living in built-up urban environments with little daily access to parks or woodland. Studies have shown that living and working in a plant-filled environment can noticeably boost mental wellbeing (see below left). By adding touches of greenery throughout your home, especially in the places where you spend the most time, you will create a more calming atmosphere in which you can go about your daily life. In particular, keep plants near any windows that look out onto built-up areas to bring nature into your view.

1 A plant-filled home can provide a psychological boost when access to nature is otherwise limited. For the full effect, create an indoor jungle packed to the rafters with foliage to stimulate your mind and improve your mood.

DESIGNING FOR THE SENSES

Fragrant house plants add an extra sensory dimension to any plant design. We often bring bulbs and other scented plants into our homes during the darkest months of the year to remind ourselves of the sights and smells of spring. Position them in a front hallway for a bright, fragrant welcome, or near a door so that you will catch a hint of fragrance every time you pass.

1 Nelly Isler (left) and brassia orchid blooms both provide a burst of scent.

2 *Stephanotis* is a classic plant choice when designing for scent.

3 Thyme bushes release a wonderful fragrance when brushed against in passing.

4 Combine scented and non-scented plants to create a larger display without an overwhelming amount of fragrance (L–R: peace lily, scented hoya, scented cyclamen).

5 "Force" grape hyacinth bulbs for scent and colour during winter (see pp198–99).

1

1

2

3

4

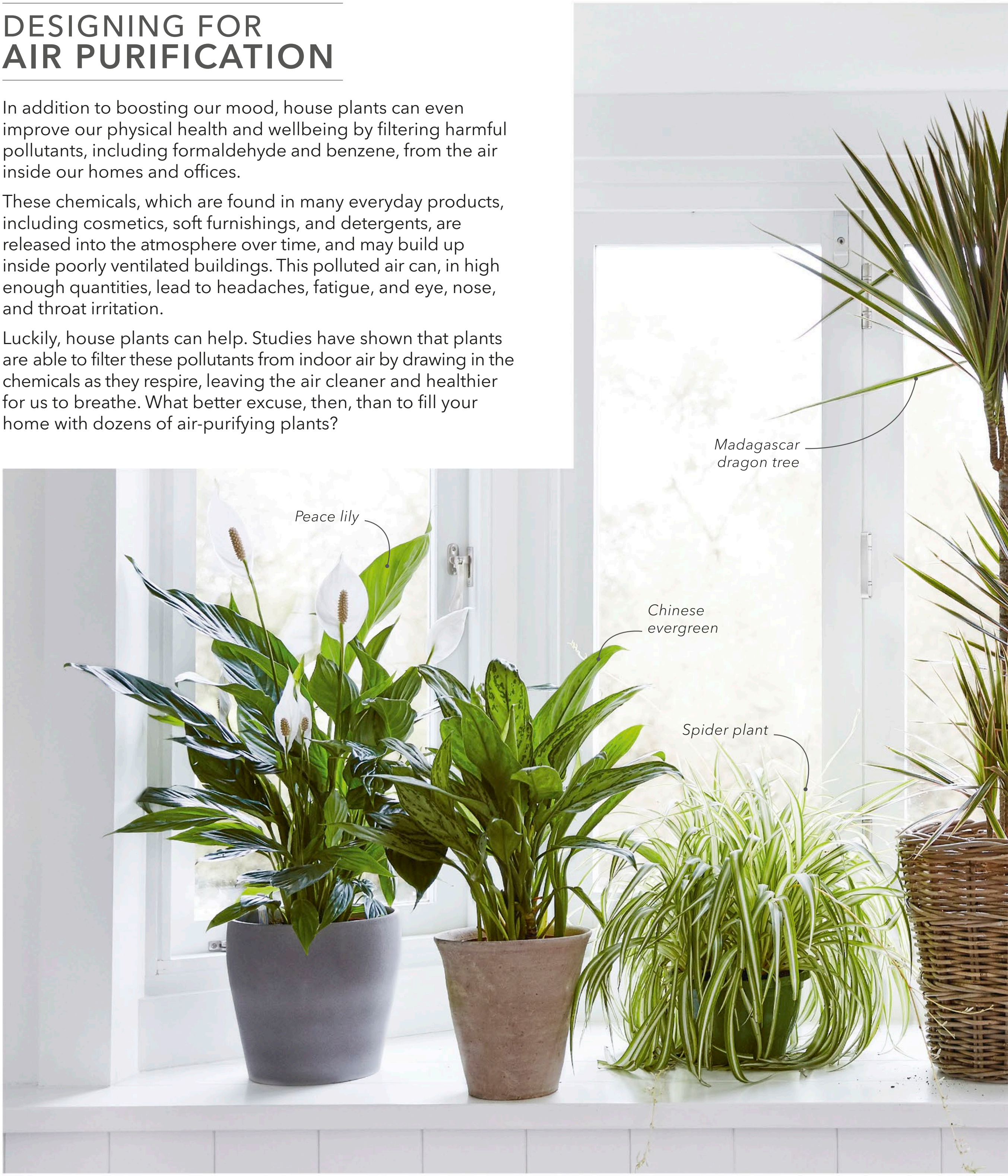
5

DESIGNING FOR
AIR PURIFICATION

In addition to boosting our mood, house plants can even improve our physical health and wellbeing by filtering harmful pollutants, including formaldehyde and benzene, from the air inside our homes and offices.

These chemicals, which are found in many everyday products, including cosmetics, soft furnishings, and detergents, are released into the atmosphere over time, and may build up inside poorly ventilated buildings. This polluted air can, in high enough quantities, lead to headaches, fatigue, and eye, nose, and throat irritation.

Luckily, house plants can help. Studies have shown that plants are able to filter these pollutants from indoor air by drawing in the chemicals as they respire, leaving the air cleaner and healthier for us to breathe. What better excuse, then, than to fill your home with dozens of air-purifying plants?



THE BEST PLANTS FOR AIR PURIFICATION

While most plants are able to purify the air to some extent, some varieties are especially effective at removing certain chemicals from the air. These include:

For formaldehyde:

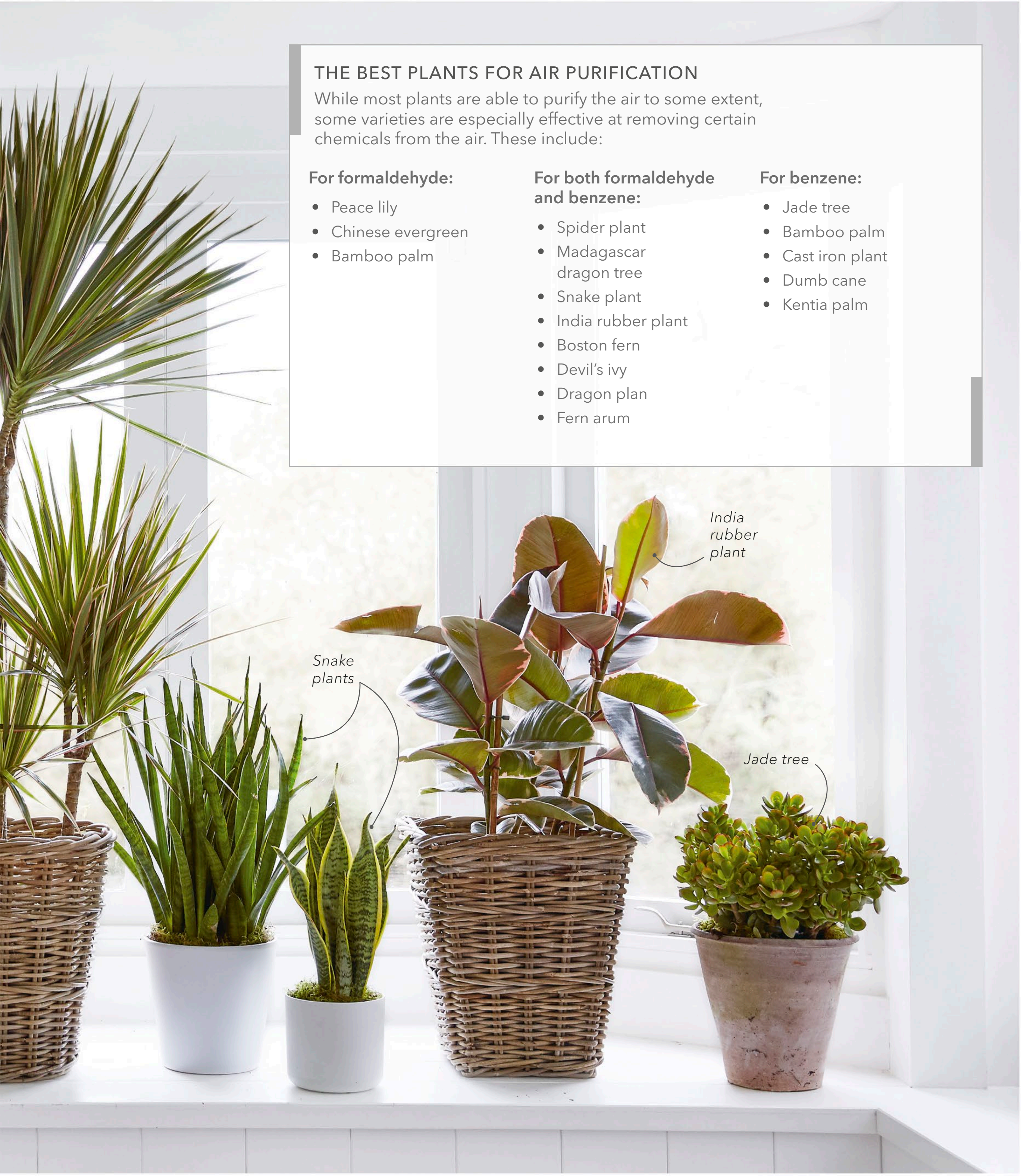
- Peace lily
- Chinese evergreen
- Bamboo palm

For both formaldehyde and benzene:

- Spider plant
- Madagascar dragon tree
- Snake plant
- India rubber plant
- Boston fern
- Devil's ivy
- Dragon plan
- Fern arum

For benzene:

- Jade tree
- Bamboo palm
- Cast iron plant
- Dumb cane
- Kentia palm



Bring the outside in Who needs a garden when you can create your own indoor oasis of lush greenery? This forest of foliage fills every available space with mood-boosting, air-purifying houseplants.

HOUSE PLANT PROJECTS

DESERTSCAPE

Grouping your cacti and succulent collection together in a single container is a great way to show off their different characteristics. The container does not have to be deep, as cacti have shallow root systems, but make sure it has adequate drainage; adding a layer of gravel beneath the compost will help prevent waterlogging if your container has no drainage holes.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANTS

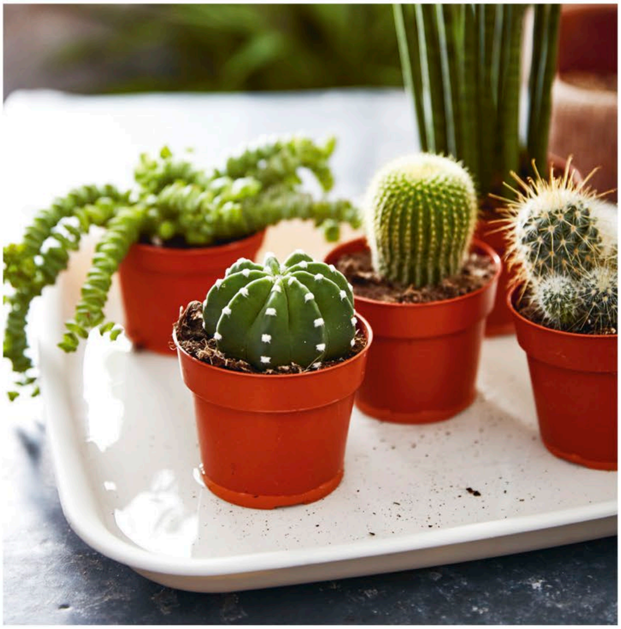
- Selection of cacti, succulents, and plants with similar care needs, such as bunny ears cacti, golden barrel cacti, and African spears

OTHER MATERIALS

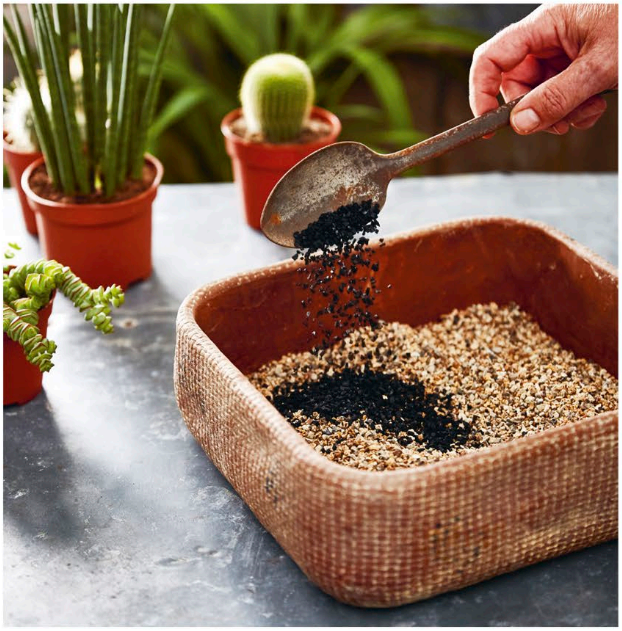
- Shallow decorative container, preferably with drainage holes
- Fine-grade gravel
- Activated charcoal
- Cactus compost
- Pebbles and small stones, to decorate

TOOLS

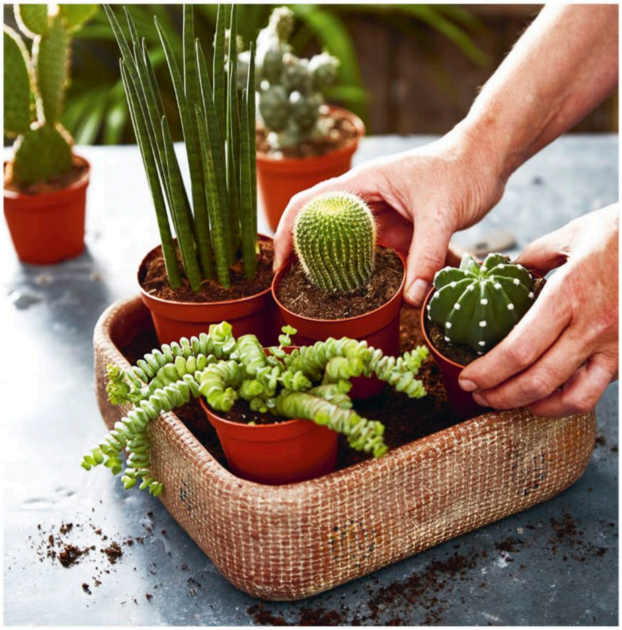
- Small tray, for watering
- Spoon or small trowel
- Dibber
- Protective cactus gloves
- Small paintbrush, for dusting



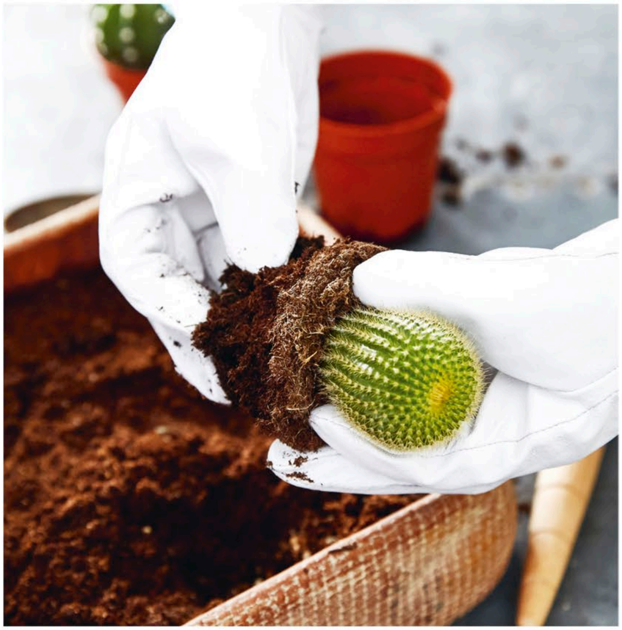
1 Water the cacti and other plants thoroughly by placing them on a small tray filled with water. This will encourage the roots to make good contact with the new compost.



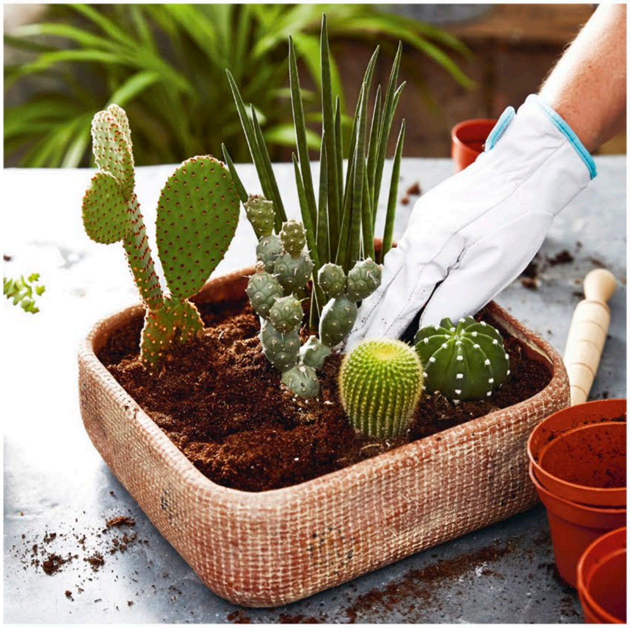
2 Pour a layer of gravel, approximately 2.5cm (1in) deep, into the base of the container. Mix in a few spoonfuls of activated charcoal to prevent the growth of fungi. Top with an even layer of cactus compost, 5–7.5cm (2–4in) deep.



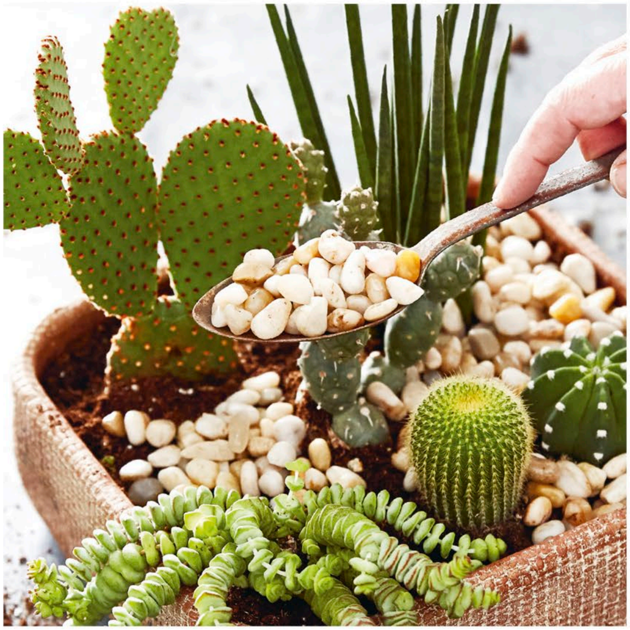
3 While still in their pots, arrange the plants on top of the compost until you are happy with their placement. Allow plenty of room for growth. Once you like the arrangement, remove the plants, remembering where you intend to plant them.



4 Select your first plant. Using the dibber, make a hole in the compost large enough to fit the plant's root ball. Wearing gloves, remove the plant from its pot and gently tease the roots to release excess soil. Repeat for the remaining plants.



5 Using a spoon, carefully fill in any gaps between the plants with compost. Firm the compost down using the back of the spoon or the dibber.



6 Decorate the surface of the compost with pebbles and small stones.

HOW TO MAINTAIN

TEMPERATURE 10–30°C (50–86°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun in summer
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy

WATERING Water your cacti when the compost is completely dry. Depending on the conditions of your living space, this will usually take 3–4 weeks. Soak the compost completely, but take care not to overwater, especially if your container does not have drainage holes, as this could cause root rot. Do not water at all between October and March.

MAINTENANCE AND CARE Gently brush off any compost caught in the spines of the plants with a soft paintbrush. Place on a sunny windowsill from autumn to spring; move the display further away from the window in summer, when the heat can become too intense. Watch out for draughts in winter, and relocate if necessary.

AIR PLANT STAND

Rootless air plants do not need soil to survive, and in the wild they are found clinging to rocky surfaces and hanging from the branches of trees. Echo their natural habitat by growing them on a wooden stand, which can comfortably display a small collection of air plants without using any glue or wire to hold them in place.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANTS

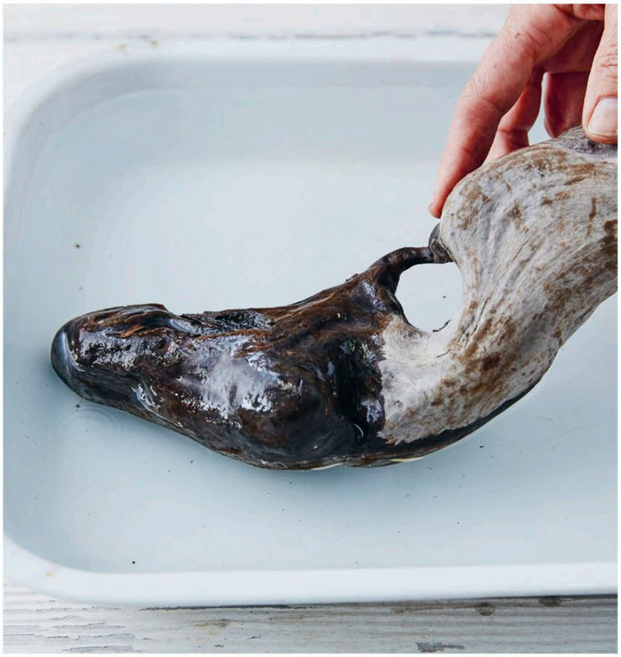
- Decorative mosses and lichen
- Selection of air plants in a variety of shapes, colours, and sizes (see pp174–75)

OTHER MATERIALS

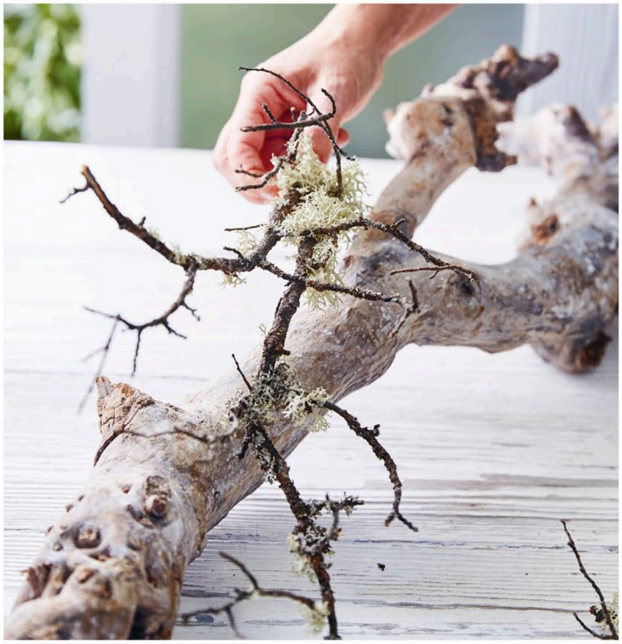
- Untreated, rugged piece of wood with plenty of crevices and hollows, such as driftwood, grapewood, cork bark, or tree fern
- Small branch
- Florist's wire

TOOLS

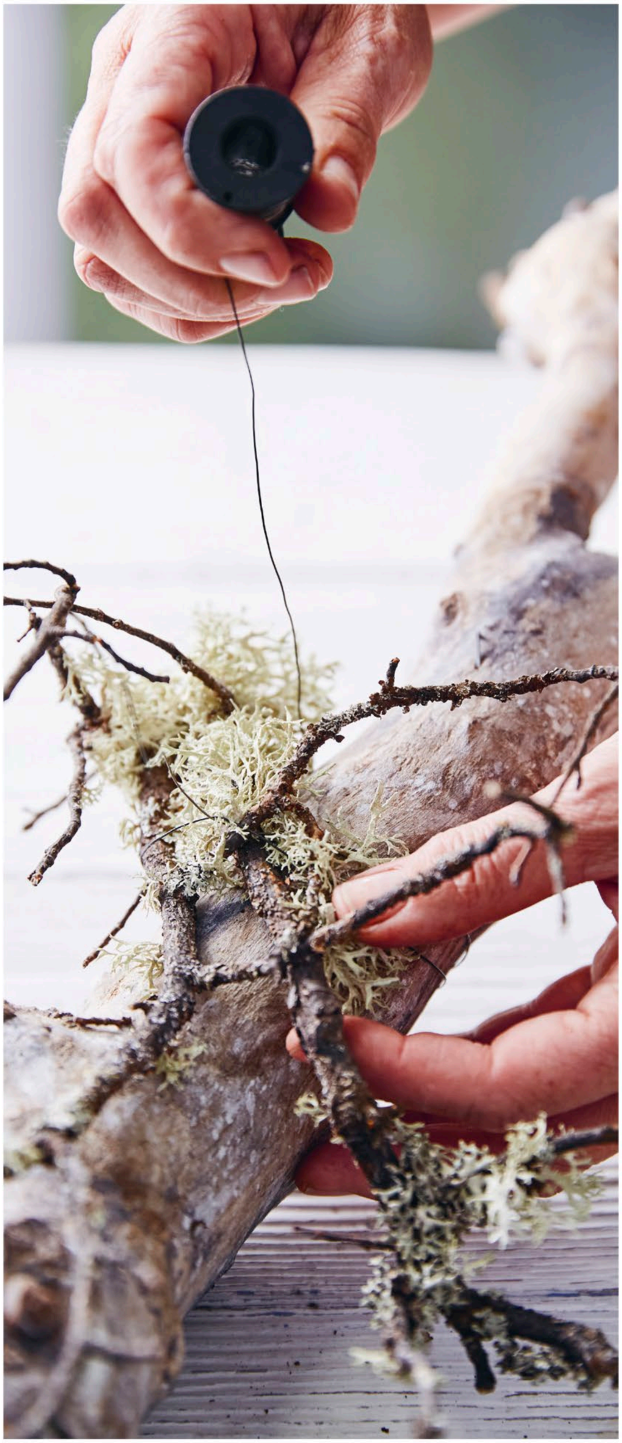
- Large bowl, for soaking
- Wire cutters
- Hot glue gun (optional)



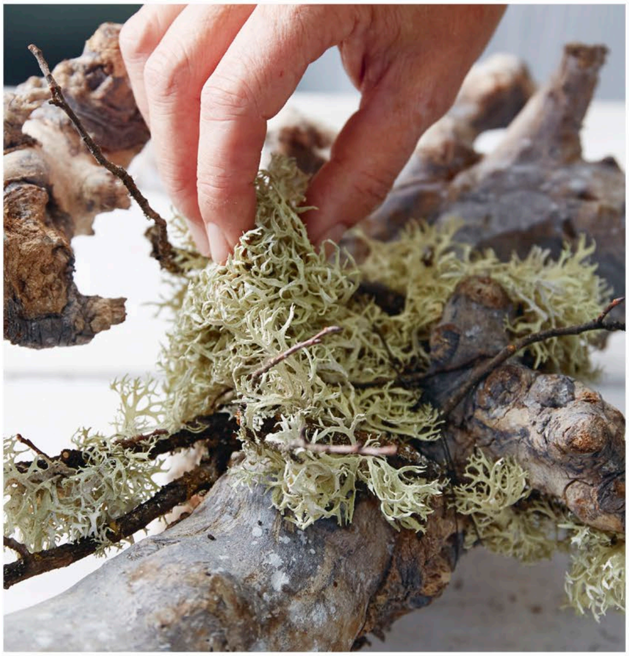
1 If using ocean driftwood, make sure it has been pre-soaked to remove all salt residue. To desalinate your own driftwood, soak it in freshwater for several weeks, replenishing the water a few times during this period.



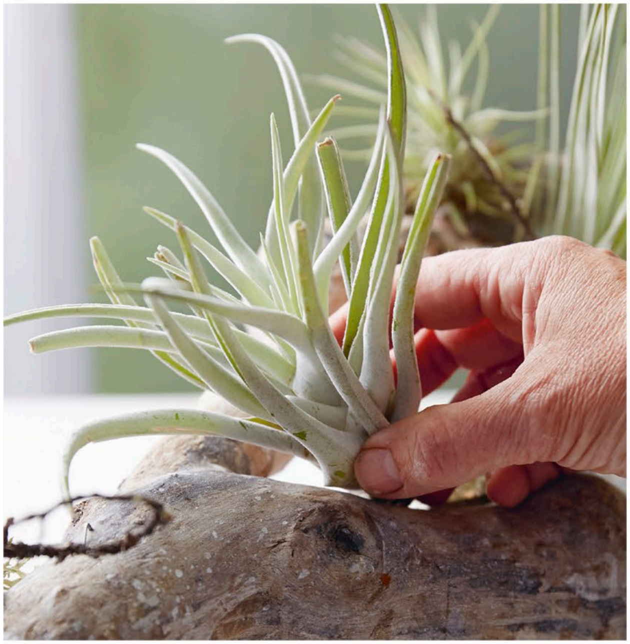
2 Thread small pieces of moss onto the small branch and place it on top of the larger piece of wood. This will double up as both a decorative feature and an additional platform upon which to arrange your smaller air plants.



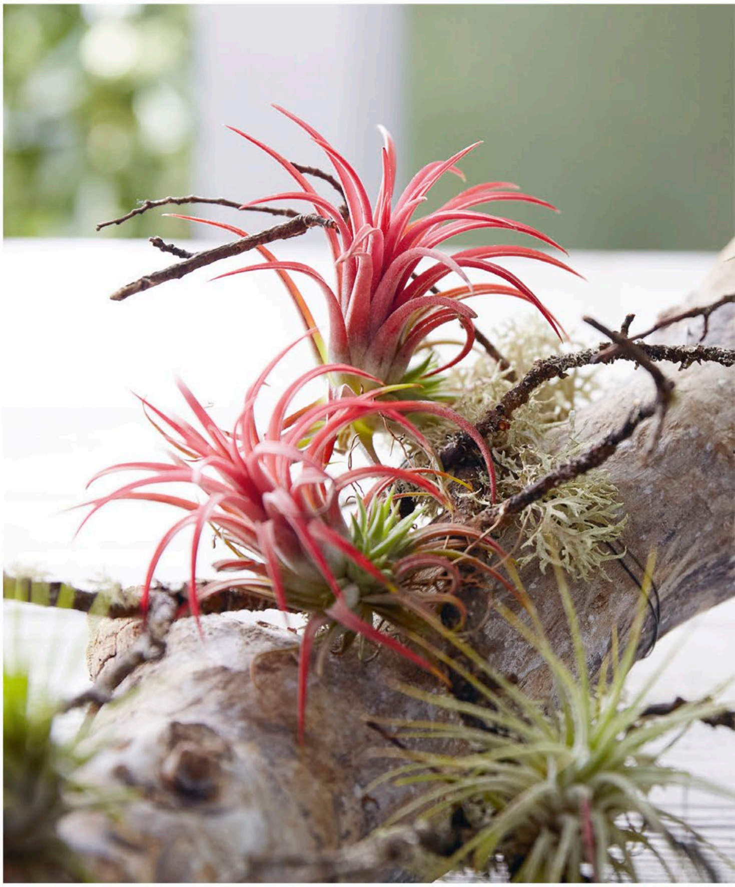
3 Fasten the branch to the wood with wire, wrapping it around at least a couple of times to ensure it is secure.



4 Attach bunches of moss and lichen to the larger piece of wood, using the wire or hot glue to secure them in place. If using glue, allow it to cool and solidify completely before adding your air plants to the display.



5 Gently arrange your air plants in the wood's natural crevices. Lighter, more delicate air plants can be placed along the attached branch. Do not glue the air plants in place (see right).



HOW TO MAINTAIN

TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY High
CARE Easy

WATERING Water your air plants with rainwater or distilled water once a week (see p185). Make sure the water is at lukewarm or at room temperature; cold water will shock the plants. Place them on a soft dishcloth and let them dry out completely before returning them to the stand. You can mist them 2–3 times a week.

MAINTENANCE AND CARE Place the stand in filtered sun. Make sure young plants have room to grow; if they become too large for their current spot, move them to a roomier, more stable part of the stand.

Never use glue or wire to attach airplants to a display. Not only would this make it very difficult to soak the plants, but the chemicals in glue may seriously harm the plants.

MACRAMÉ HANGER

Macramé, the art of decoratively knotting cords and rope, can be used to create a simple hanger in which to display your favourite house plants. Use wooden beads and cotton cord to create the simple, modern look shown here, or try a different materials, such as metallic beads or unbleached rope, to design a unique macramé hanger of your own.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANT

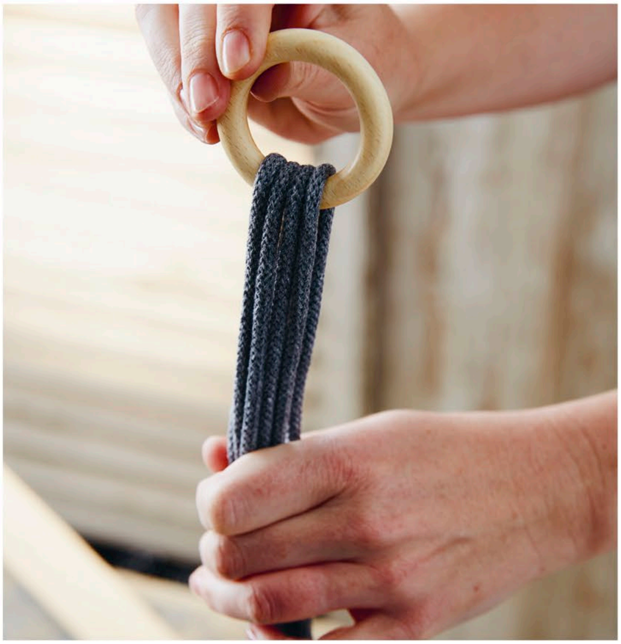
- Suitable plant in a 15cm (6in) pot, such as a delta maidenhair fern

OTHER MATERIALS

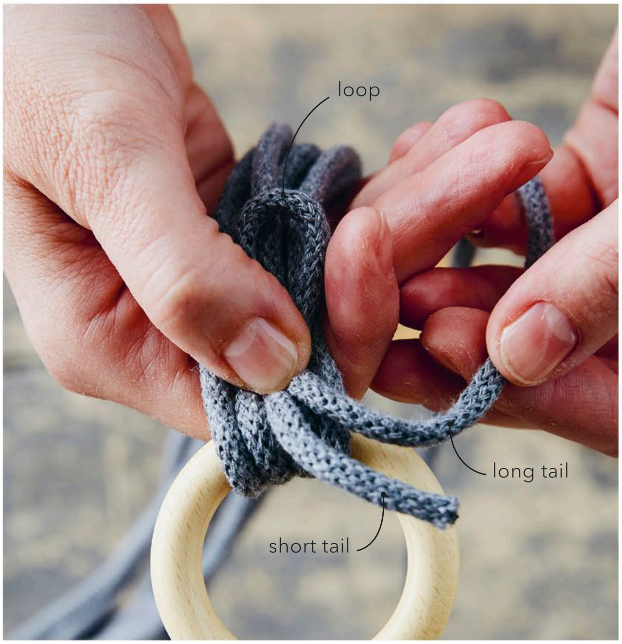
- 10m (32ft) strong, non-stretch cord or string, such as cotton cord
- Wooden ring
- S-hook
- 8 wooden beads (4 small and 4 large)
- Decorative pot sleeve suitable for a 15cm (6in) plant

TOOLS

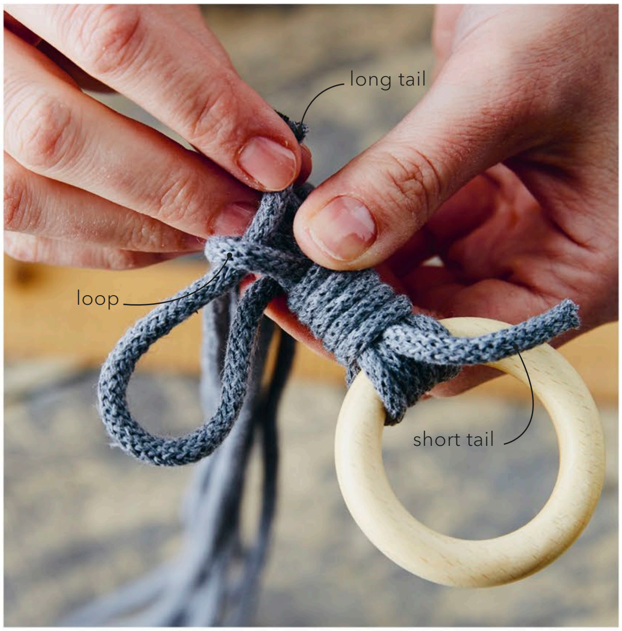
- Ruler or tape measure
- Scissors



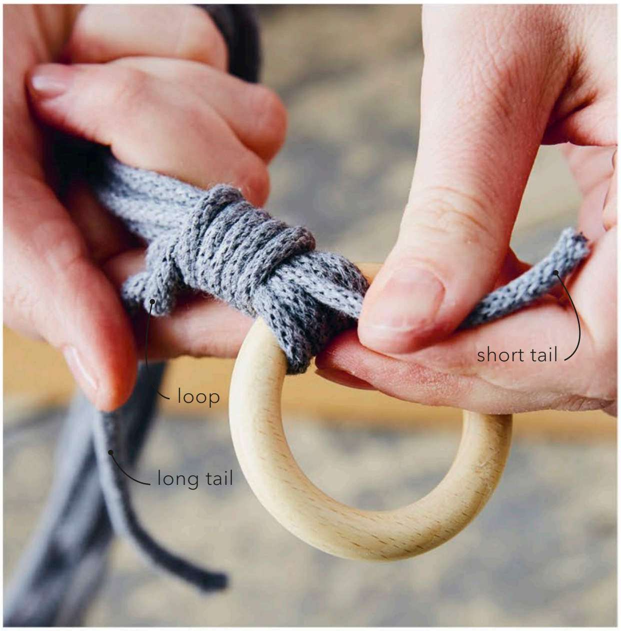
1 Cut 4 lengths of cotton cord measuring 220cm (7¼ft), and 2 lengths measuring 50cm (20in). Thread the 4 long cords through the wooden ring, folding them in half over the edge. Hold the cords together in one hand just below the ring, leaving the lengths trailing below.



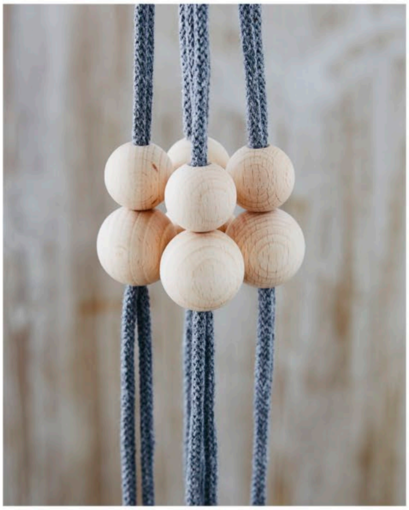
2 Take one of the shorter cords and make a loop at one end. Pinch the loop in place on top of the trailing cords in your right hand, leaving both the long and short tails of the loop above the wooden ring.



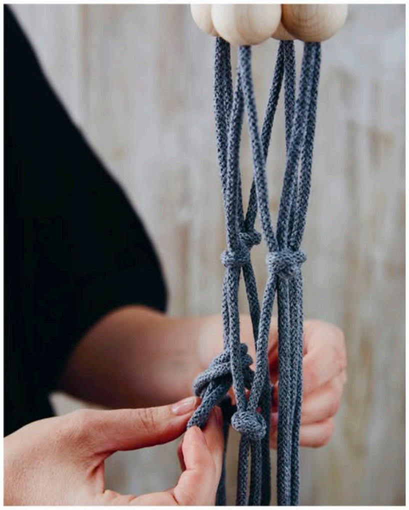
3 Tightly wrap the long tail around the loop and trailing cords 5 times, moving further away from the wooden ring. After 5 turns, thread the remainder of the long tail through the loop hole.



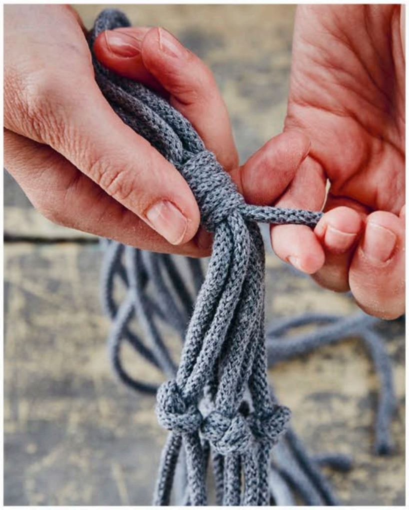
4 Pull the short tail so that the loop slides inside the 5 turns. Cut off both ends close to the binding and tuck inside to complete the knot. This technique is known as a “wrapping knot”.



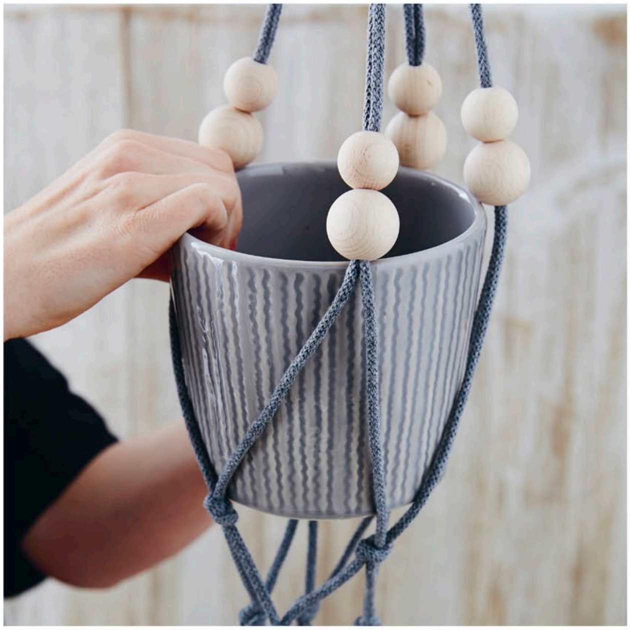
5 Using the S-hook, hang the ring up and check that you have 8 equal lengths of cord hanging down. Separate the cords into 4 pairs. Thread 1 small and 1 large wooden bead onto each pair of cords, approximately 30cm (12in) down from the ring.



6 Take 1 cord from 2 adjacent pairs and tie them together in a knot about 8cm (3in) down from the beads. Repeat this 3 times until all the cords are tied together. Repeat this process about 6cm (2in) below these knots (again taking 2 cords from adjacent pairs) to make another set of knots. The cords should now resemble a net.



7 Gather all the cords about 6cm (2in) below these knots. Using the second short length of cord, tie them together in another wrapping knot (see steps 2–4). Ensure this knot is as tight as possible, then trim any excess cord to the desired length.



8 Finally, fit your decorative pot sleeve securely into the hanger, then gently place your choice of plant inside the pot.

HOW TO MAINTAIN

WATERING When the plant needs watering, carefully remove it (and the pot) from the macramé hanger to prevent the cord from staining and rotting.

MAINTENANCE AND CARE Before displaying your plant, test its weight in the macramé hanger by gently lifting it up by the S-hook. The wrapping knots should hold firm; if the pot feels insecure within the hanger, remove it and retie the knots until you are confident that they will hold.

As the plant grows, it will cascade beautifully over the sides of the hanger. If it becomes too large and needs repotting, replace it with another 15cm (6in) plant rather than squeezing it back into the hanger in its larger pot.

OPEN BOTTLE TERRARIUM

A terrarium is a semi-enclosed glass container that creates a warm, humid microclimate for the plants that grow within. For this open bottle terrarium, choose a selection of foliage plants that showcase a variety of leaf shapes and colours. Pick one large "feature" plant that will stand out from the rest, taking care not to overcrowd the bottle so that they all have room to grow.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANTS

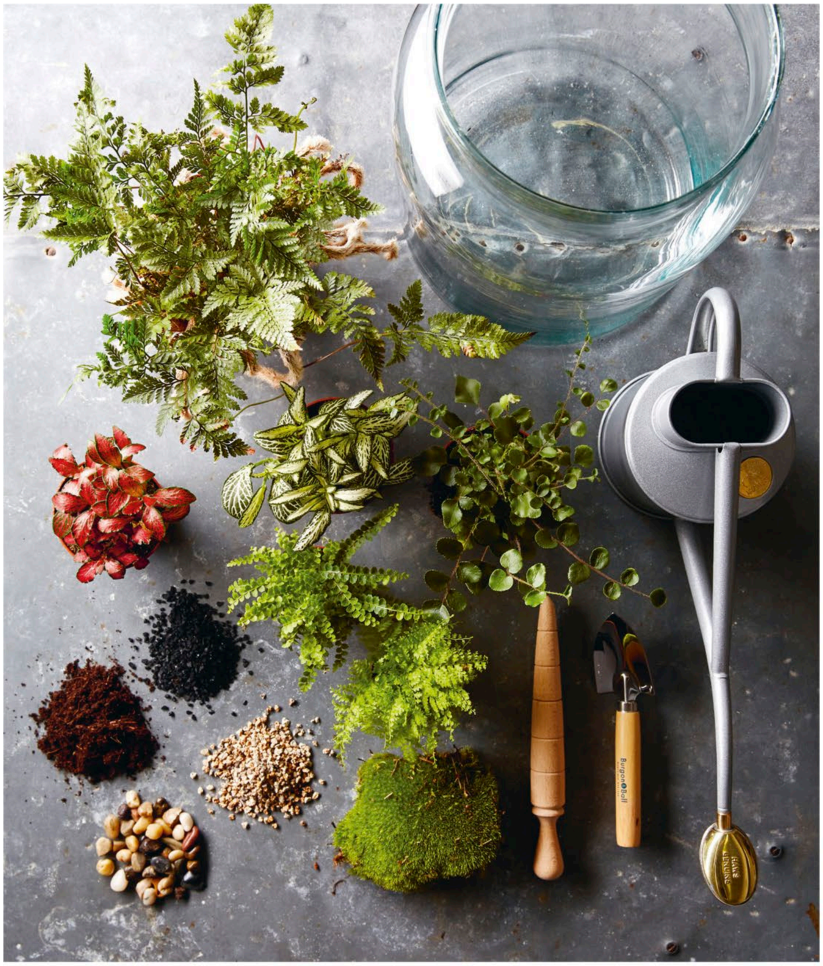
- Selection of humidity-loving foliage plants (including 1 larger focal plant), such as small ferns, peperomias, and fittonias
- Decorative mosses (optional)

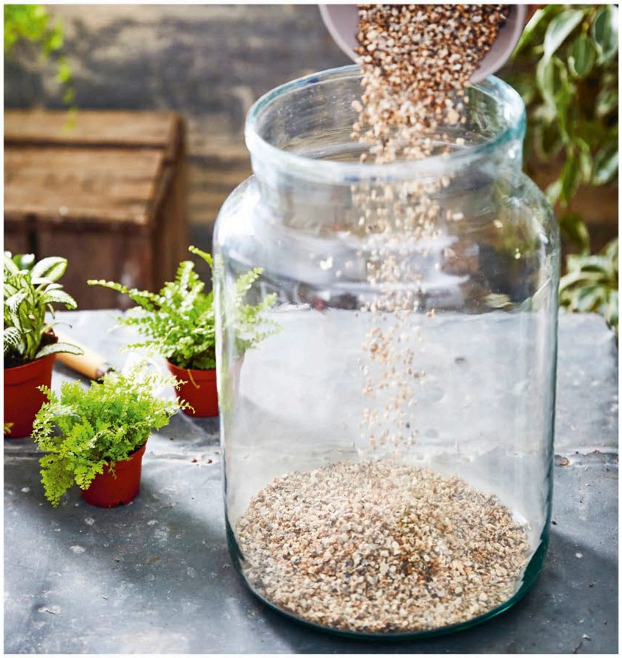
OTHER MATERIALS

- Wide, open-topped, heavy glass bottle or jar
- Fine-grade gravel
- Activated charcoal
- Multipurpose compost
- Decorative pebbles (optional)

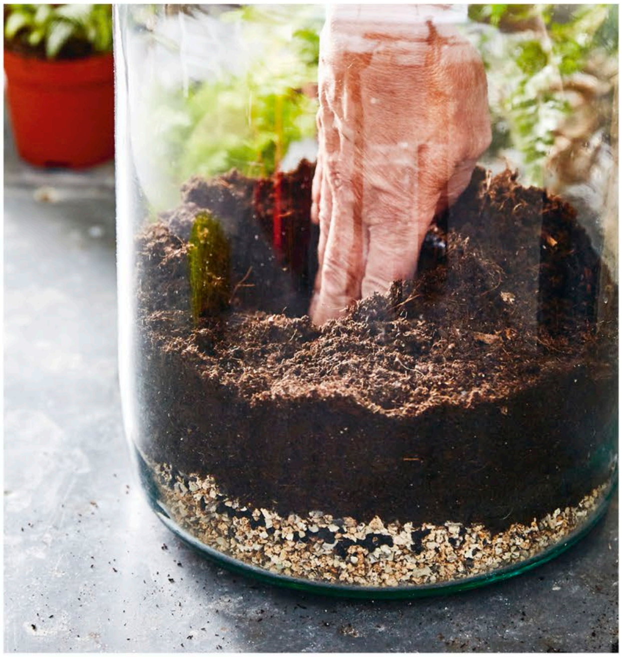
EQUIPMENT

- Dibber
- Small watering can with a rose attachment

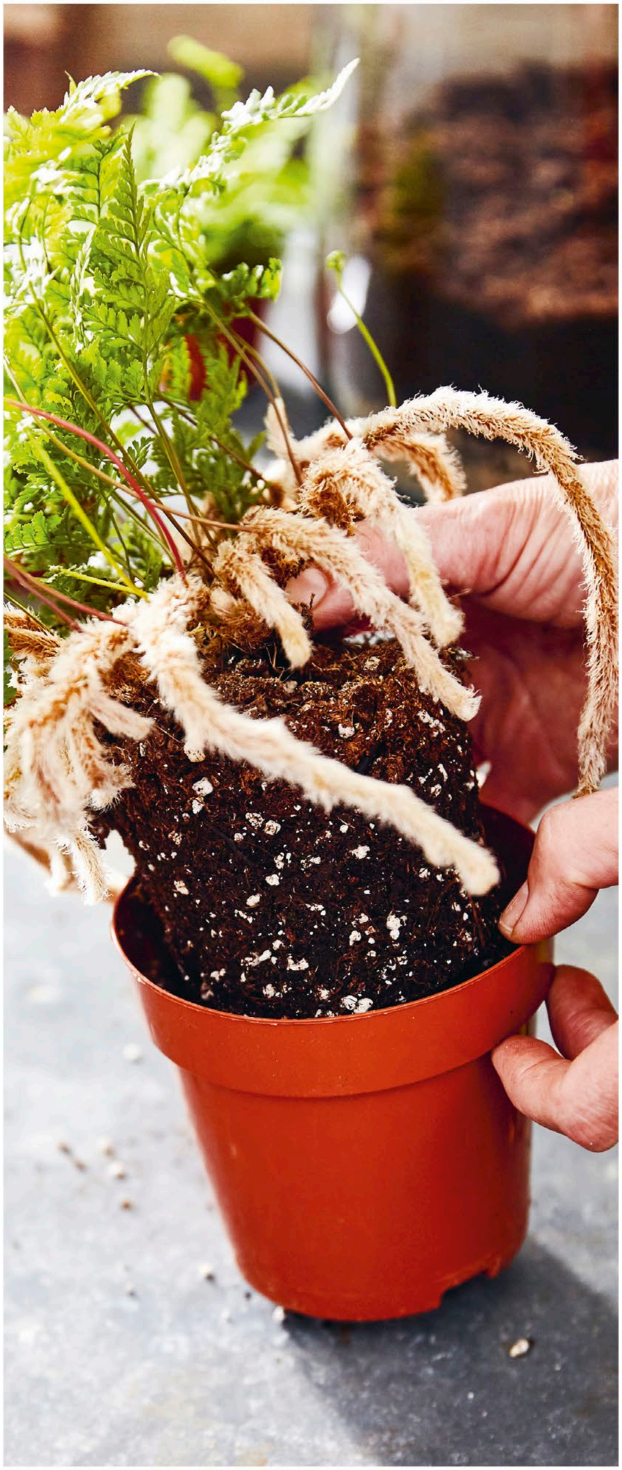




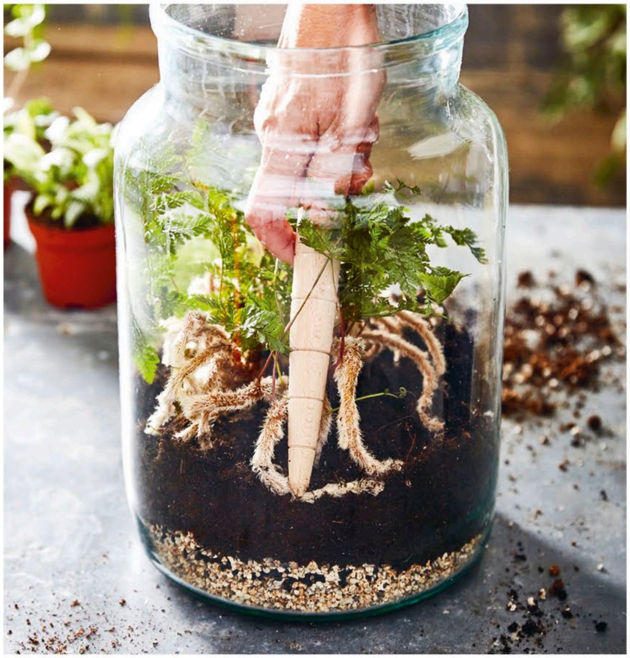
1 Pour a layer of gravel, approximately 2.5cm (1in) deep, into the base of the bottle for drainage. Mix in a few spoonfuls of activated charcoal to prevent the growth of fungi.



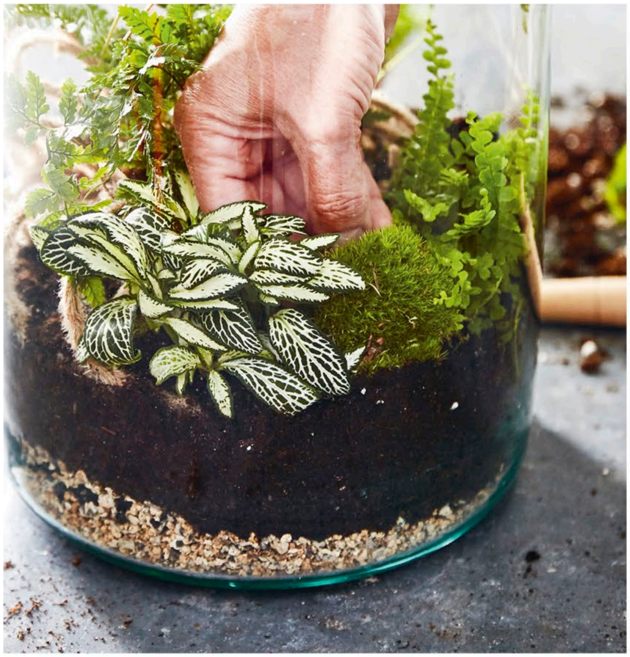
2 Add an even layer of compost, 5–7.5cm (2–4in) deep, over the gravel-charcoal mixture. Make a hole in the compost the same size as the focal plant's root ball.



3 Remove the focal plant from its pot and loosen the roots to encourage healthy growth. Gently place the plant in the hole.



4 Firm the compost around the base of the plant using the dibber. Repeat steps 3–4 with your remaining plants.



5 If you wish, cover the surface of the compost with decorative mosses or pebbles. Carefully wipe the inside of the vase clean.

HOW TO MAINTAIN

WATERING Use a small watering can fitted with a rose attachment to water the plants. The grouped plants and semi-enclosed space create a humid environment that traps moisture, so take care not to overwater. Only water the plants when the compost dries out.

MAINTENANCE AND CARE Place the terrarium in a bright spot, but out of direct sunlight, which may scorch the leaves through the glass.

WILLOW CLIMBING FRAME

This simple support for climbing plants is quick and easy to assemble, and makes an attractive feature even before it is hidden by leafy plant growth. Once you've mastered this basic frame, you can apply the technique to more ambitious climbing projects by training the plant's stems onto a trellis room divider or staircase, or fanning them out across a wall.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANT

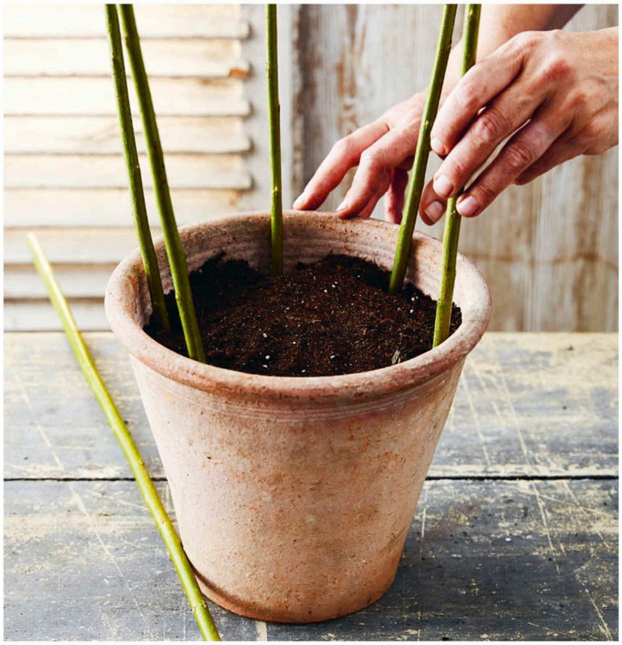
- Climbing plant, such as a philodendron, hoya, jasmine, or stephanotis

OTHER MATERIALS

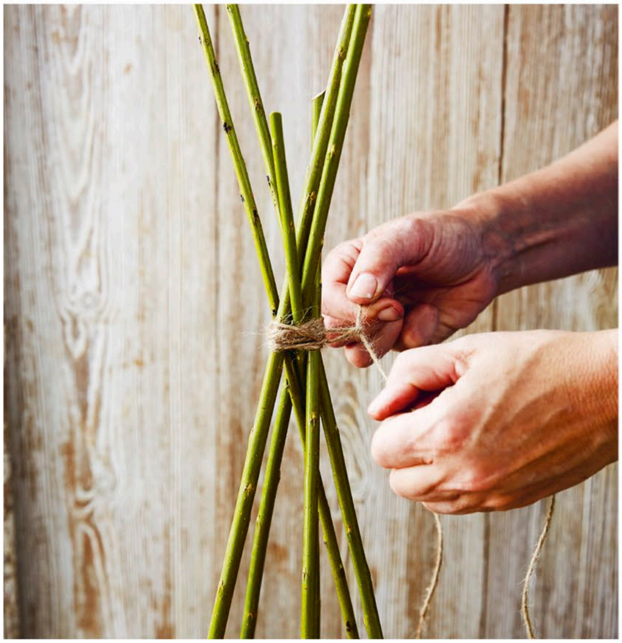
- Heavy-based pot with drainage holes
- House plant or multipurpose compost
- 7 pliable willow poles, each at least 1m (3ft) in length
- Garden twine

TOOLS

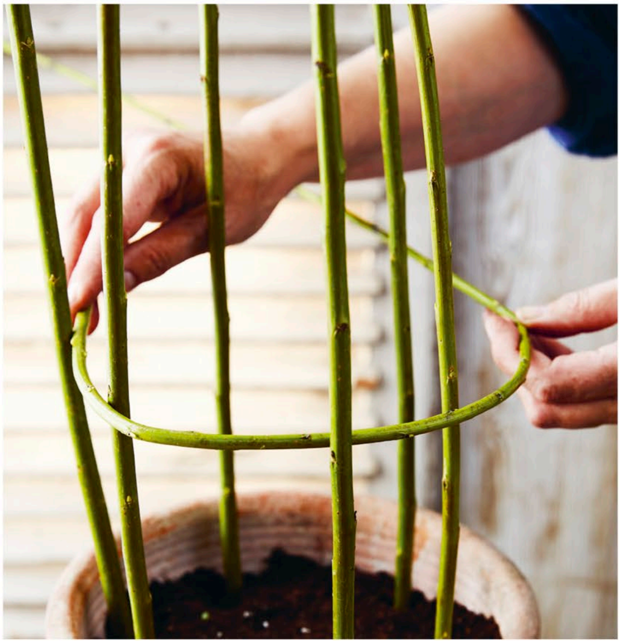
- Secateurs



1 Fill your pot with compost. Insert 6 evenly spaced willow poles around the edge of the pot.

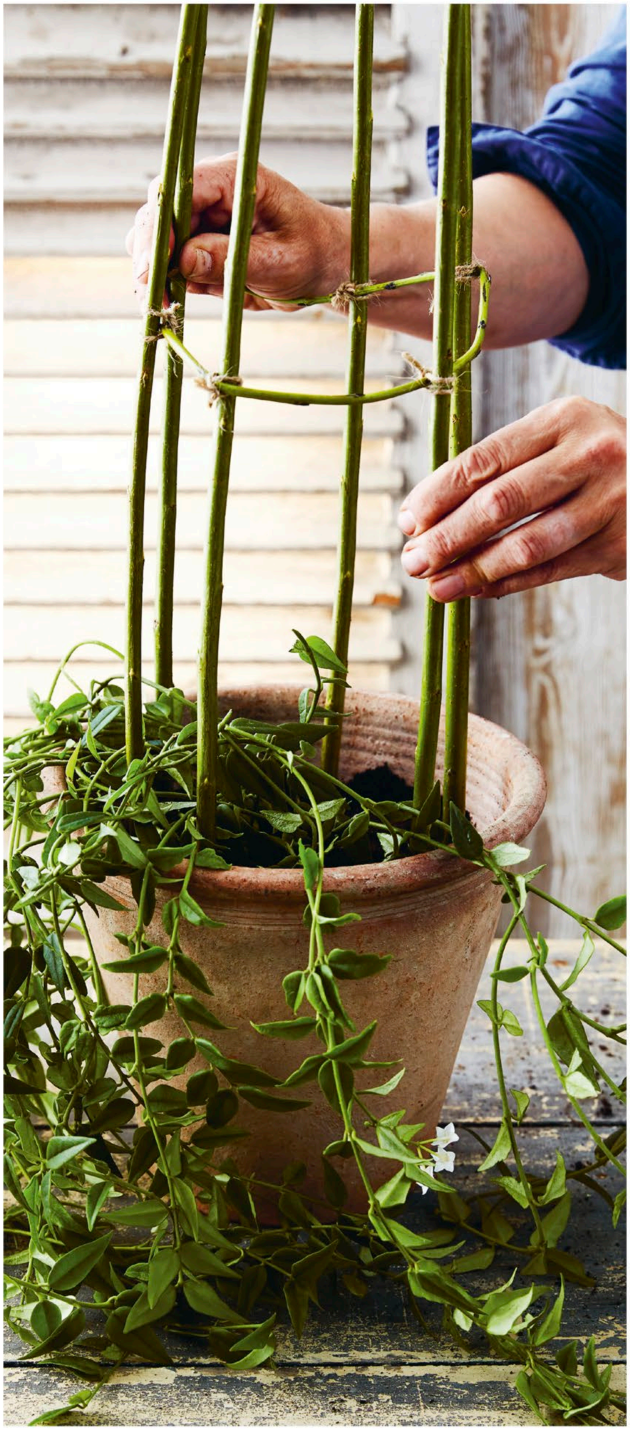


2 Gather the poles together at a comfortable height directly above the centre of the pot, and tie together securely with a length of twine. Trim away any excess length from the tops of the poles using secateurs.



3 Weave the final length of willow through the poles, roughly one-third of the way up the stand. Secure in place with twine to prevent it from slipping, then remove the entire frame from the pot and place it to one side.

4 Make a hole in the compost the size of the root ball and lower the plant in, ensuring it sits at the same level that it rested at in its original pot. Fill in any gaps with new compost, firming it down gently.



5 Spread the untangled stems of the climber out in a fan around the base of the pot. Insert the willow frame back into the compost, over the stems.

6 One by one, wrap and weave the long stems of the plant around the poles. Thicker or heavier stems may need to be tied in with the twine; take care not to tie it too tightly.

HOW TO MAINTAIN

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn; reduce in winter, watering when the top of the compost feels dry. Mist every few days in summer, or when necessary.

MAINTENANCE AND CARE As the plant grows, continue to weave the stems around the willow poles, tying them in with twine where necessary. If the plant climbs higher than the frame, most can be pruned to keep the size in check and the plant compact.

Alternatively, position the overgrown plant next to a trellis and weave the longer stems onto the frame, training it over time and securing with garden twine.

SUCCULENT WREATH

Plant an assortment of small succulent plants into a ring of carpet moss to create a beautiful and unique decorative wreath that will require minimal care when kept in the right conditions. Pair a variety of succulents with several different types of fluffy moss to add interest and character to your display.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANTS

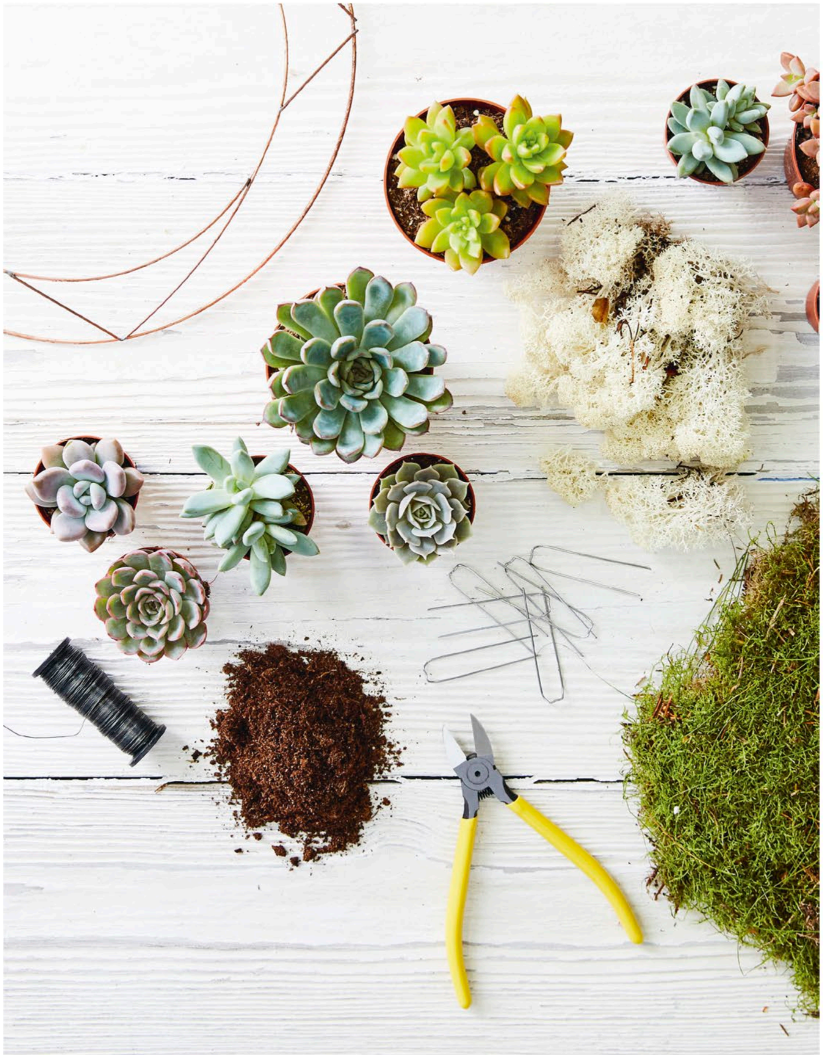
- Carpet moss
- Selection of approximately 12 mini succulent plants, each with a 5cm (2in) pot size, such as echeverias, sempervivums, aeoniums, and crassulas
- Reindeer moss

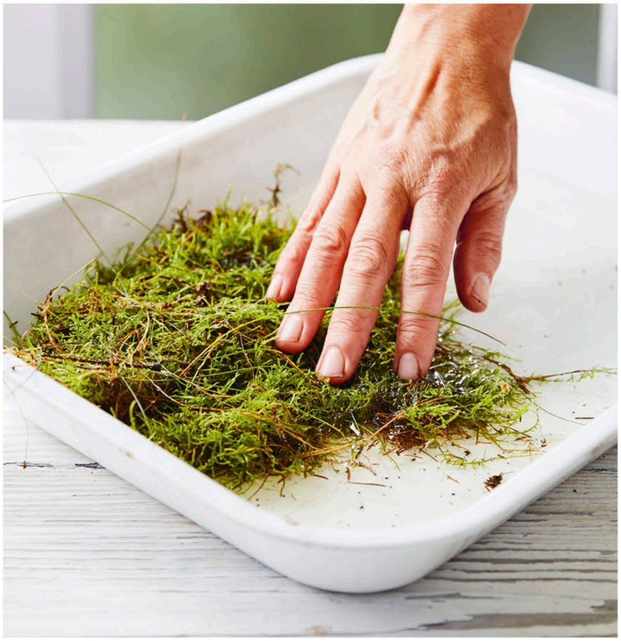
OTHER MATERIALS

- Florist's wire wreath frame, 30cm (12in) in diameter
- Compost
- Florist's mossing pins
- Florist's wire

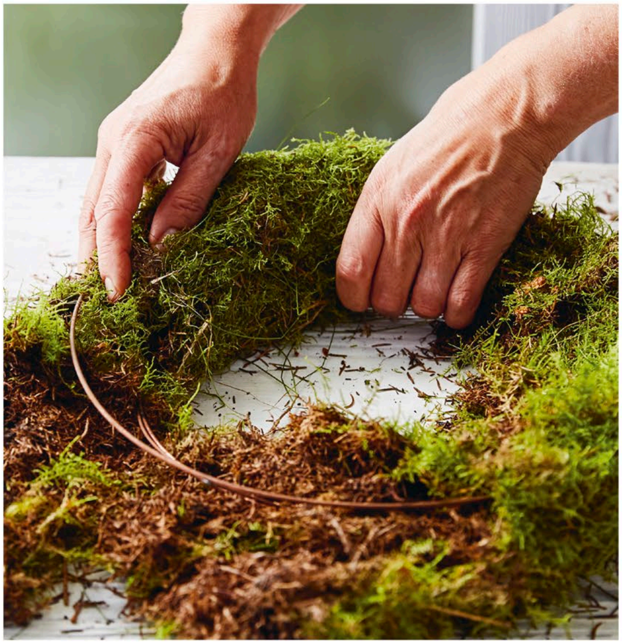
TOOLS

- Tray, for soaking
- Wire cutters
- Mister spray (optional)

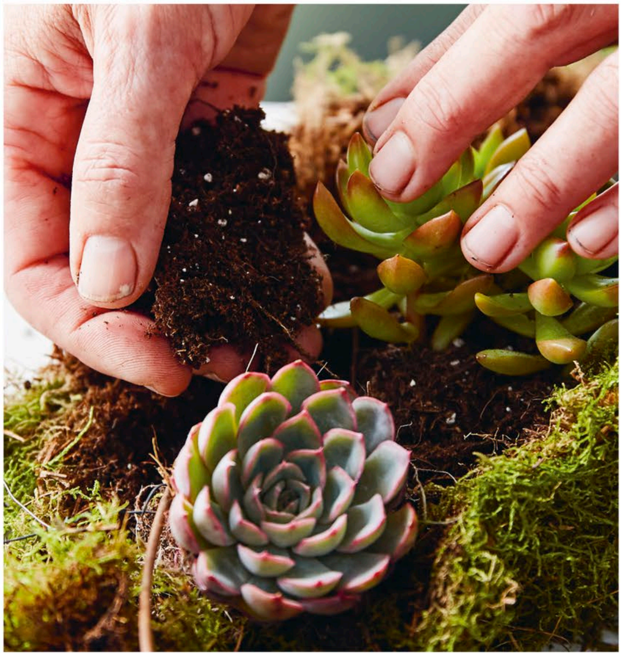




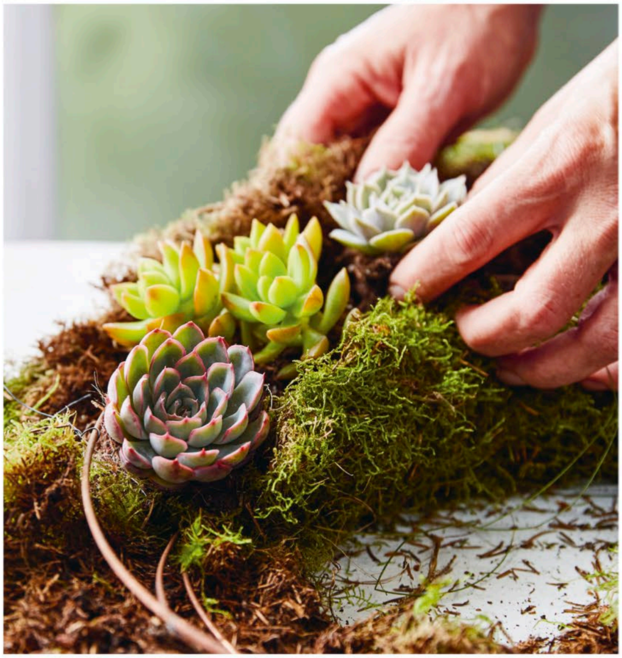
1 Soak the pieces of carpet moss in a tray of water, to make them easier to work with.



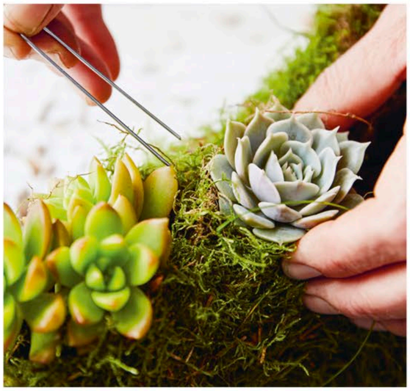
2 Line the wire wreath frame with the carpet moss. Make sure that the bottom and sides of the frame are covered, and that you have enough moss to fold over the root balls of the plants.



3 Remove the plants from their pots and loosen their roots. Fold back the moss and bed the plants into the frame, allowing plenty of room for the plants to grow. Fill in the empty spaces between the plants with compost.

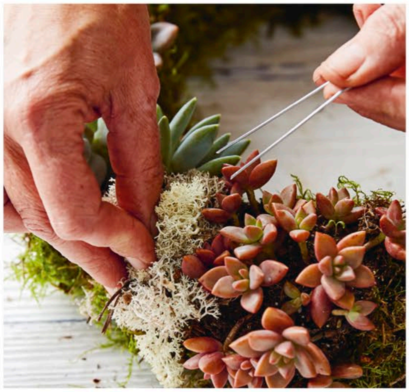


4 Fold the carpet moss back into place, over and around the bases of the plants and compost.



5 Use the mossing pins to secure the moss firmly around the base of the plants. Push the pins all the way down into the soil, so the moss holds tightly in place.

6 For extra security, wrap florist's wire around your wreath to stop the moss unravelling as it beds down.

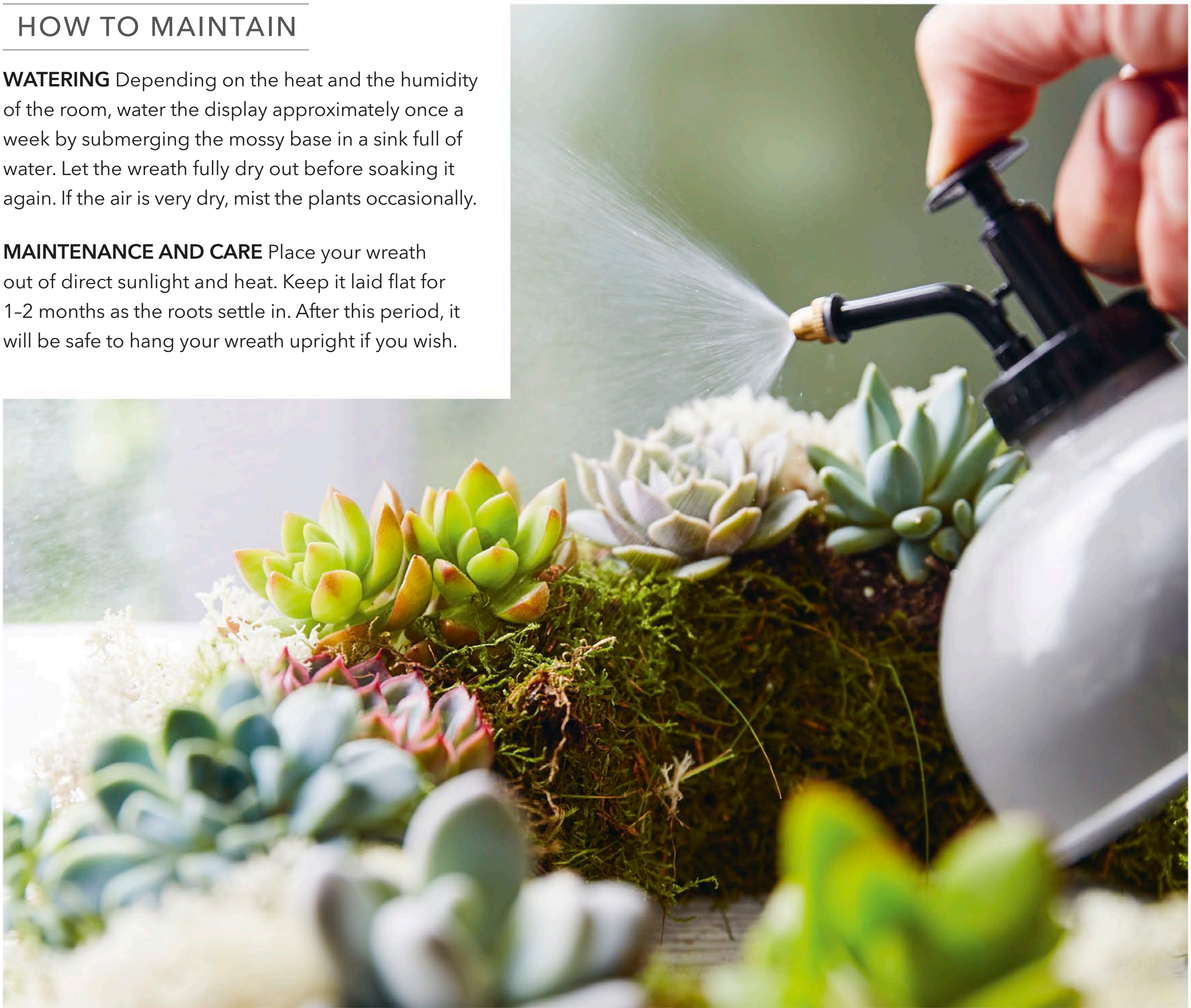


7 Finally, cover any exposed areas of soil or wire with pieces of reindeer moss, firmly pinning them in place.

HOW TO MAINTAIN

WATERING Depending on the heat and the humidity of the room, water the display approximately once a week by submerging the mossy base in a sink full of water. Let the wreath fully dry out before soaking it again. If the air is very dry, mist the plants occasionally.

MAINTENANCE AND CARE Place your wreath out of direct sunlight and heat. Keep it laid flat for 1–2 months as the roots settle in. After this period, it will be safe to hang your wreath upright if you wish.



KOKEDAMA FERN

A type of bonsai, "kokedama" is the practice of suspending the roots of a plant in a mud ball coated with soft green moss. It is a great way to make a beautiful, hanging, sculptural object with a live plant. Arranging many kokedama plants together forms what is known as a "string garden".

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANTS

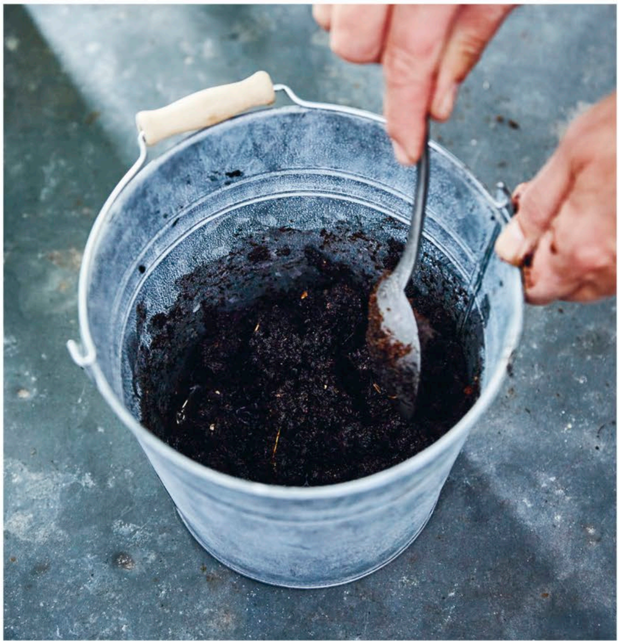
- Mature fern, such as a Cretan brake, asparagus, or staghorn fern
- Sheet of carpet moss

OTHER MATERIALS

- Potting compost
- Akadama (clay-like mineral used in bonsai)
- Garden twine

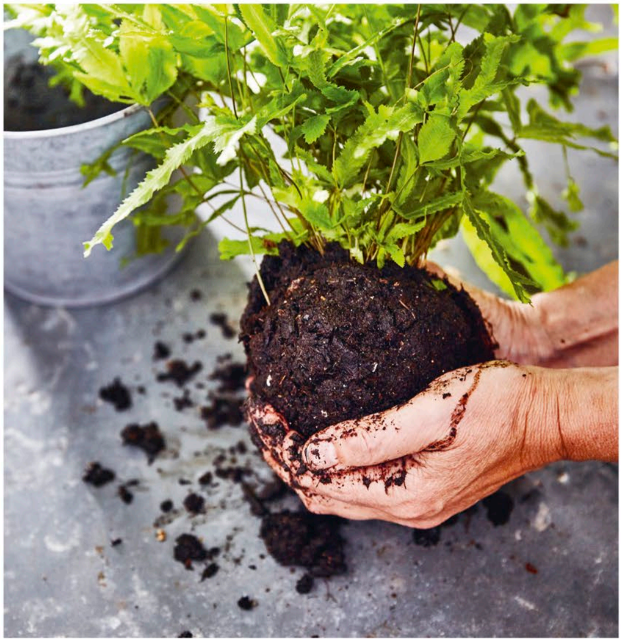
TOOLS

- Bucket
- Scissors
- Mister spray

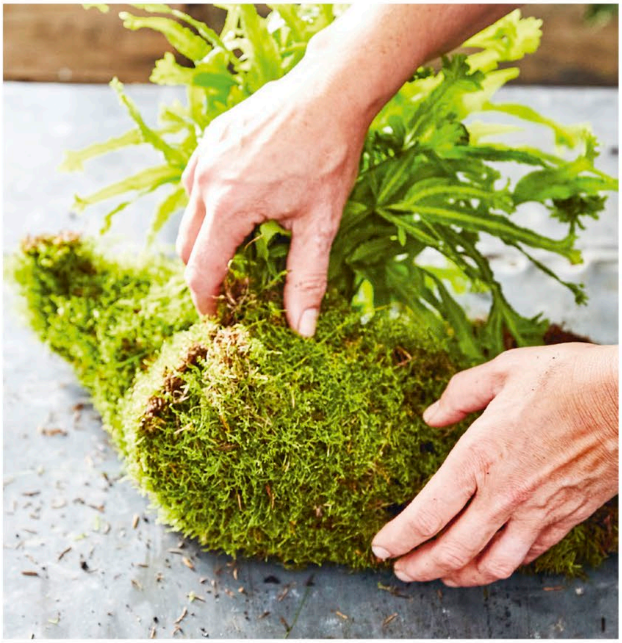


1 Create a 2:1 mixture of potting compost and akadama in a bucket, adding a little water until it reaches a sticky, wet consistency. The akadama turns the compost into a "mud-cake" that will mould around the plant's roots.

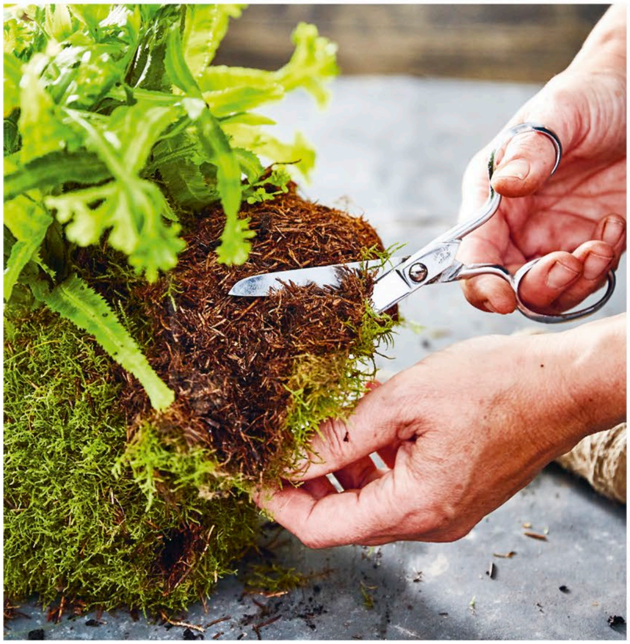
2 Take the fern from its pot and gently shake loose some of the original compost from its roots.



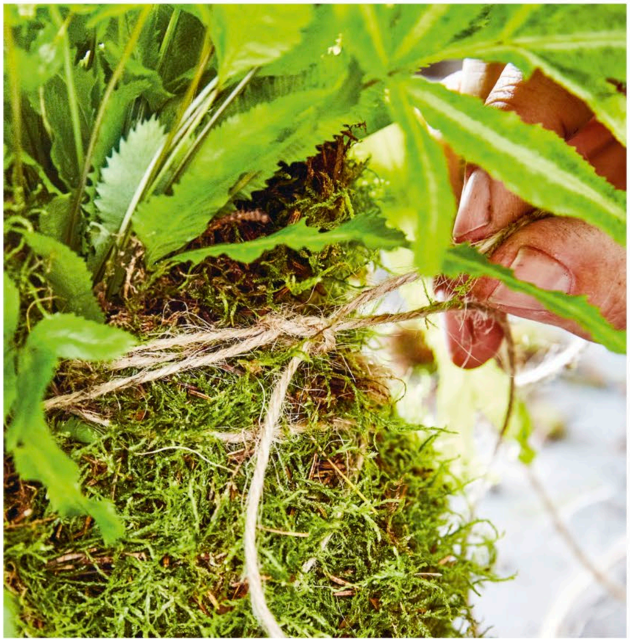
3 Encase the fern roots in a layer of the damp compost-akadama mixture, approximately 2.5cm (1in) thick. Aim to create a ball of about the same volume as the original pot.



4 Envelope the root ball in a sheet of carpet moss, gathering the moss around the stem.



5 Trim the excess moss with a pair of scissors, leaving some behind at the neck of the root ball.



6 Wrap twine around the neck of the moss ball to secure the moss in place. Knot the twine firmly. To hang the fern up, attach a second length of string around the neck of the kokedama to form a loop.

HOW TO MAINTAIN

TEMPERATURE 13–75°C (55–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy

WATERING Check if your plant needs to be watered by testing the weight of the moss ball. When it feels light, submerge the kokedama ball in water, keeping the foliage dry. Allow it to soak for 10–25 minutes, or until it is fully saturated. Remove the kokedama from the bucket, and gently squeeze the ball to drain any excess water.

MAINTENANCE AND CARE Place your kokedama in a humid spot with indirect light. Mist regularly using a spray bottle.

MOSS PICTURE FRAME

Living walls and vertical gardens have become increasingly popular in urban homes across the world. You can easily make one at home using a selection of mosses and moss-like plants, or alternatively with air plants. Creating a moss arrangement is all about combining various textures and colours to mimic a landscape.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANTS

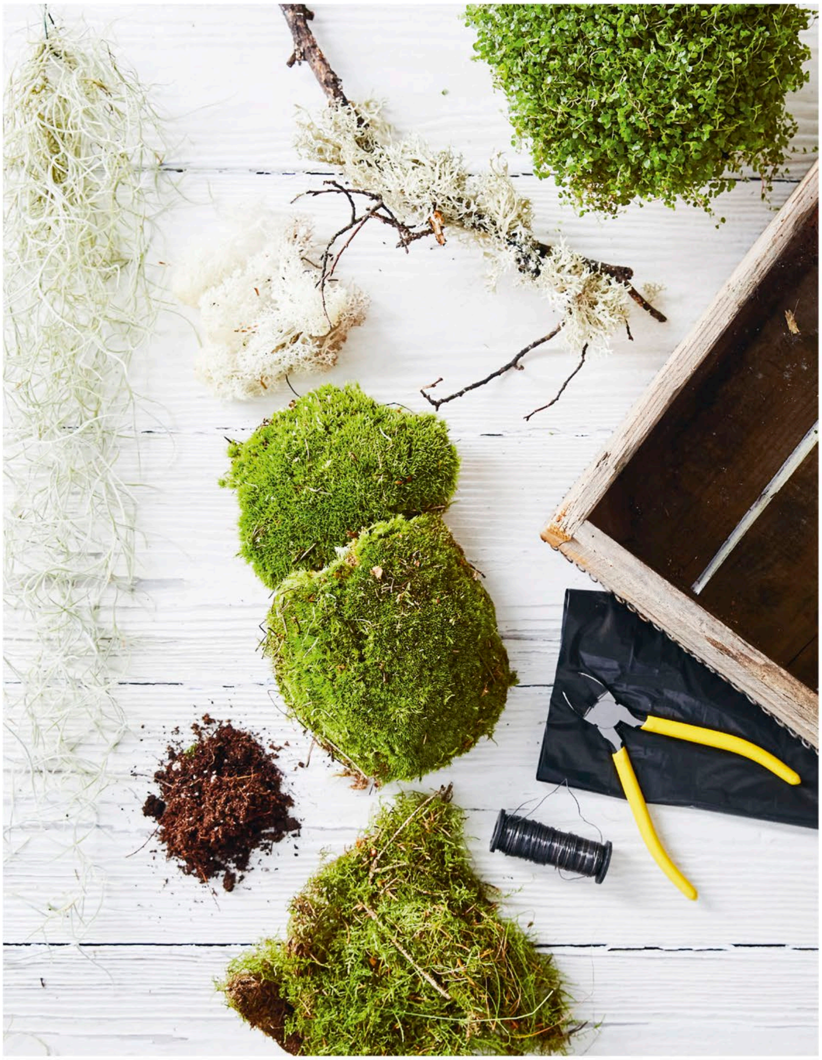
- Variety of different mosses, such as sphagnum moss to use as a foundation, bun moss to create hills and dips, and more decorative types like reindeer moss or trailing Spanish moss
- Moss-like plants, such as mind-your-own-business (see p140)

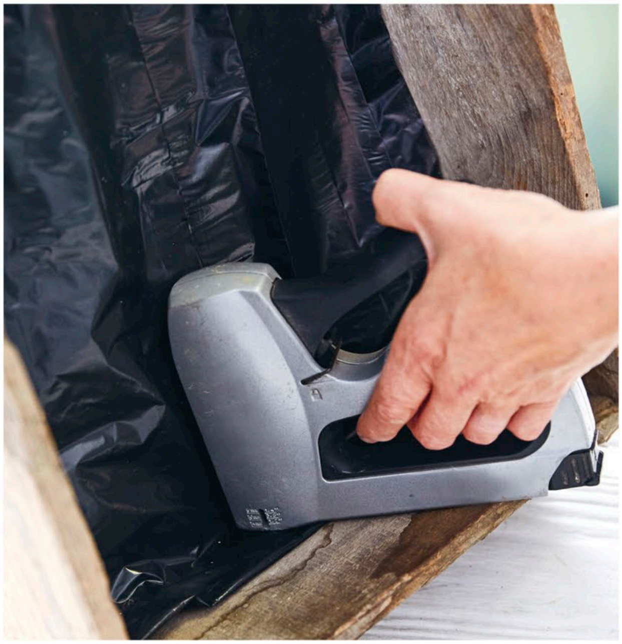
OTHER MATERIALS

- Repurposed shallow wooden container, such as a wine crate or old chitting tray, with a depth of approximately 10cm (4in)
- Plastic bin liner
- Florist's mossing pins
- Decorative branches, such as twigs with lichens growing on them and small pieces of driftwood
- Florist's wire

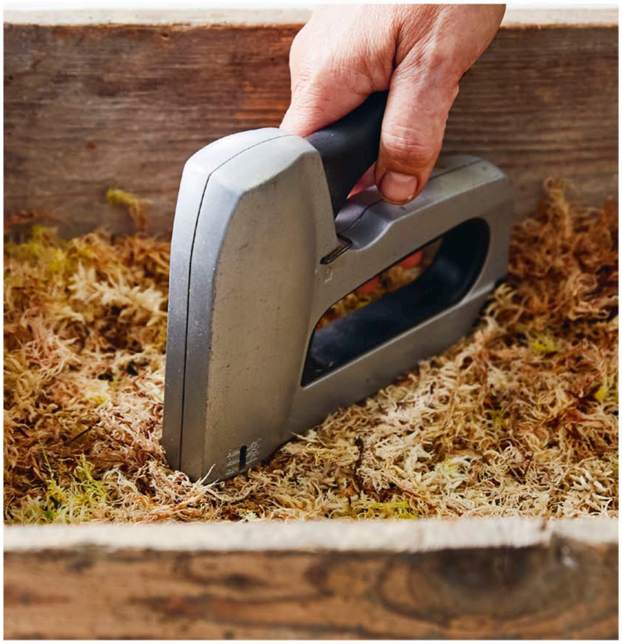
TOOLS

- Stapler or staple gun
- Wire cutters
- Watering can with a rose attachment or mister spray

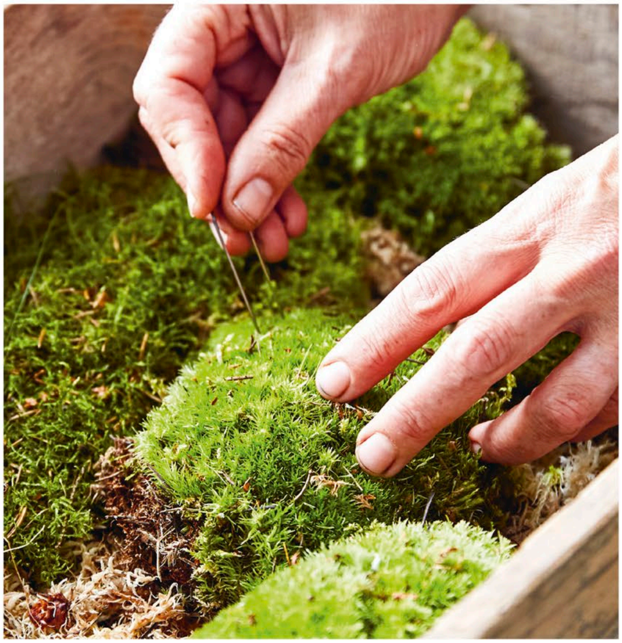




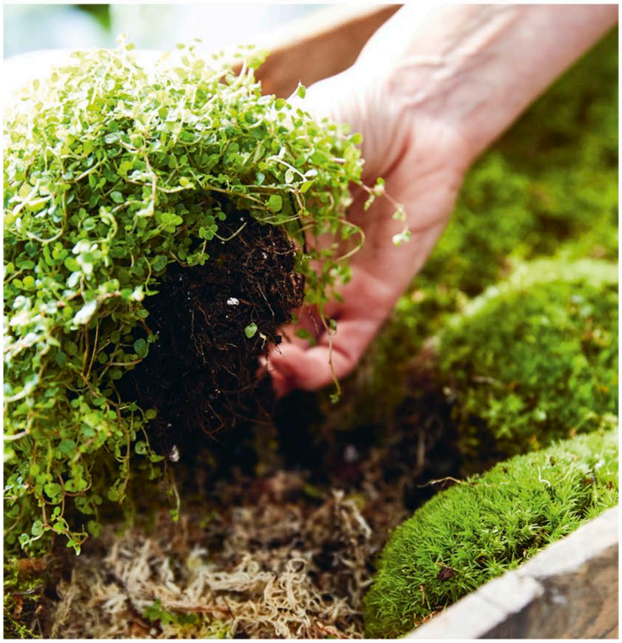
1 Line the back of the wooden container with a plastic bin liner, stapling it into place. This will help retain moisture within the frame.



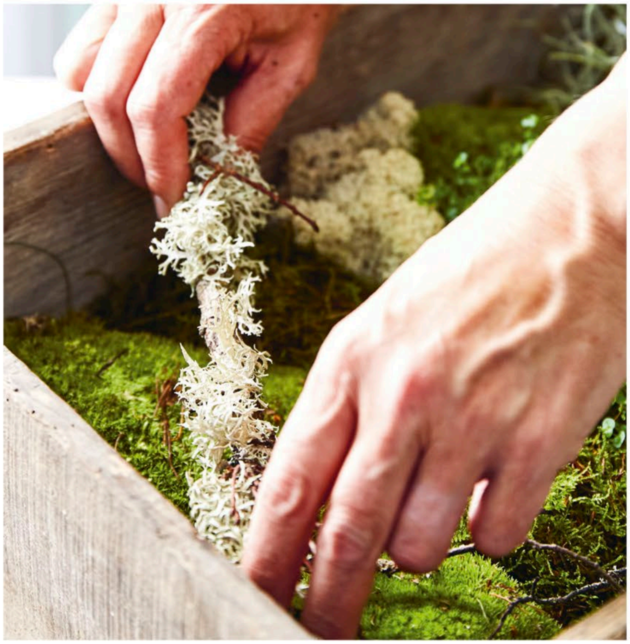
2 Working on a flat surface, staple or pin a thin layer of sphagnum moss to the back of the container to completely cover the plastic.



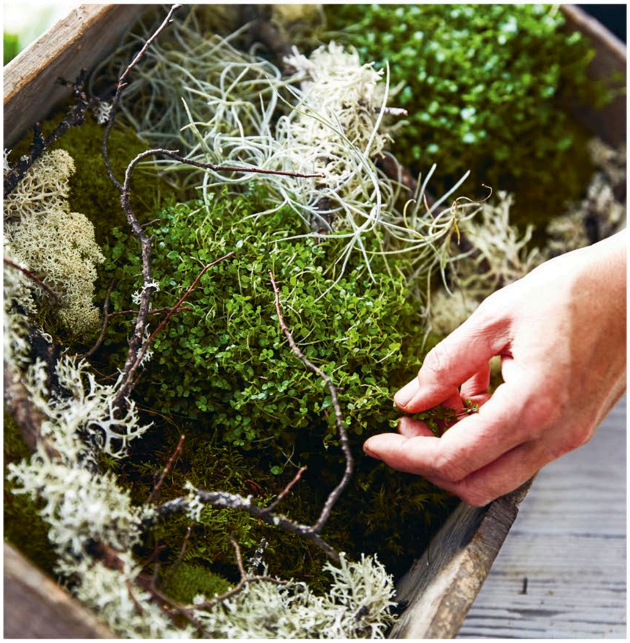
3 Arrange pieces of bun moss in the container to add texture and interest. Pin to the sphagnum moss using mossing pins. Begin adding pieces of decorative mosses to the display as desired.



4 Remove your moss-like plants from their pots and loosen the roots. Bed the plants down between mounds of bun moss.



5 For extra interest, attach pieces of decorative moss to twigs and small branches using wire, then place them into the display by wedging them securely into the lower corners of the frame.



6 Add a few final pieces of decorative mosses to the display as desired, combining different colours and textures to mimic a landscape. Secure them discreetly to the twigs using wire.

HOW TO MAINTAIN

WATERING Lightly water or mist the moss frame every few days. If dry air or central heating dries the plant out, you can also completely soak the moss to revive it.

MAINTENANCE AND CARE Keep the frame laid flat for 1–2 months, to allow the moss and rooted plants to settle into place. After that time, you can prop up the display or hang it upright if you wish.

As with all photosynthetic organisms, your moss wall will prefer high humidity and indirect light; a bathroom would be ideal.

DRY TERRARIUM

Unlike the humidity-loving plants displayed in the bottle terrarium (see pp64–67), the plants in this display prefer drier, desert-like conditions. Choose a selection of succulents and cacti that vary in height and shape to create a more interesting display. This open terrarium does not self-irrigate, and so must be watered occasionally.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANTS

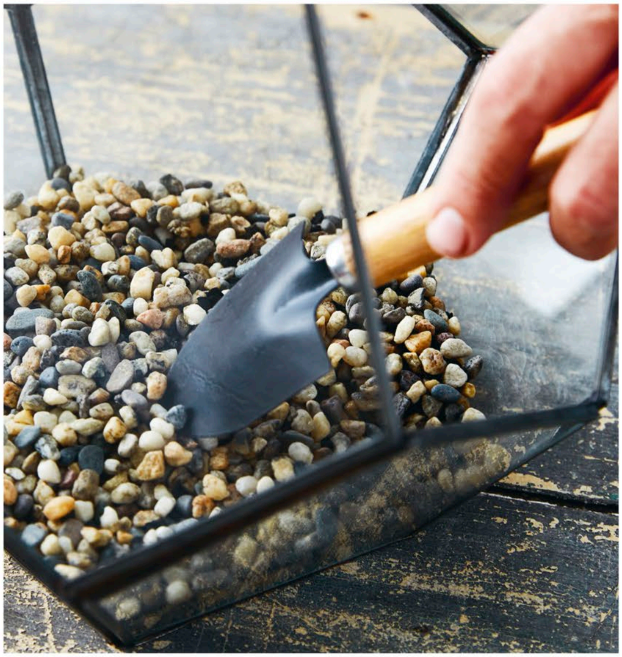
- Selection of plants (including 1 larger focal plant), such as *Crassula*, *Haworthia*, and *Echeveria*

OTHER MATERIALS

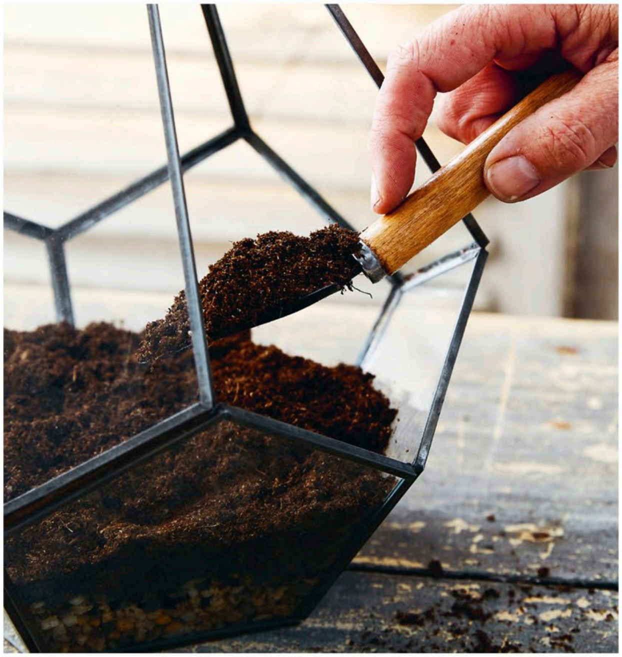
- Glass terrarium with an opening of at least 18cm (7in)
- Gravel or small pebbles
- Activated charcoal
- Cactus compost
- Decorative pebbles

TOOLS

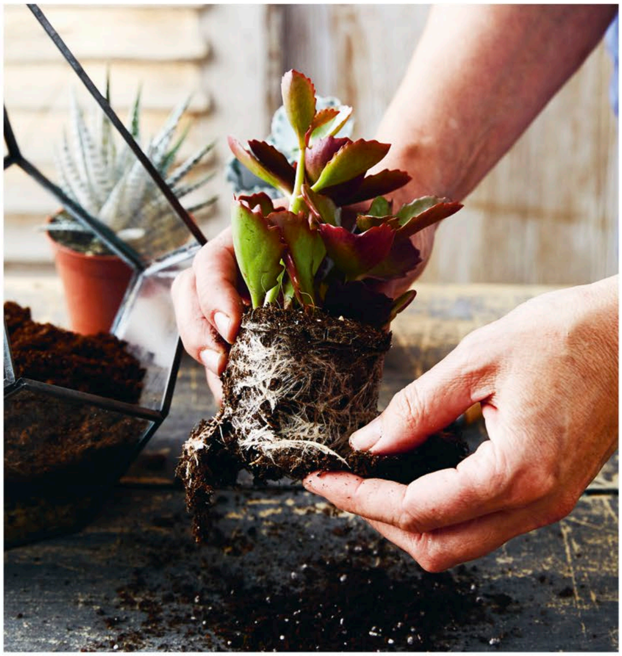
- Small trowel or spoon
- Dibber
- Watering can



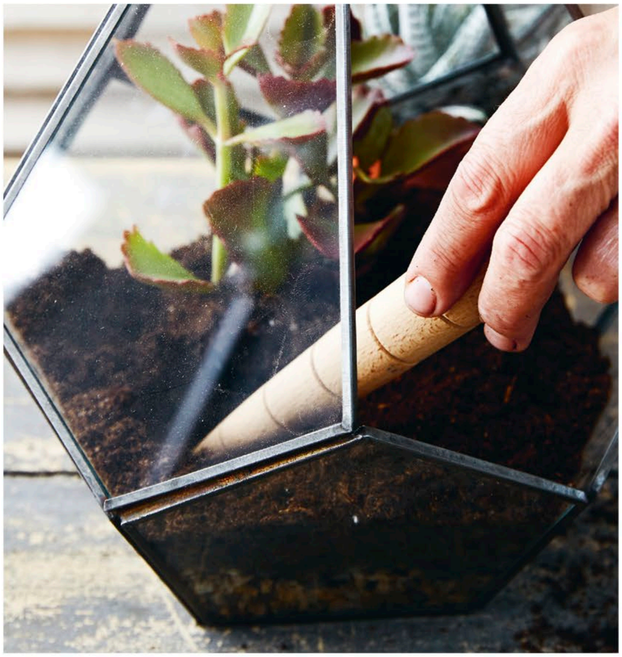
1 Pour a shallow layer of gravel, with a depth of approximately 2.5cm (1in), over the base of the terrarium. Mix a small handful of activated charcoal into the gravel.



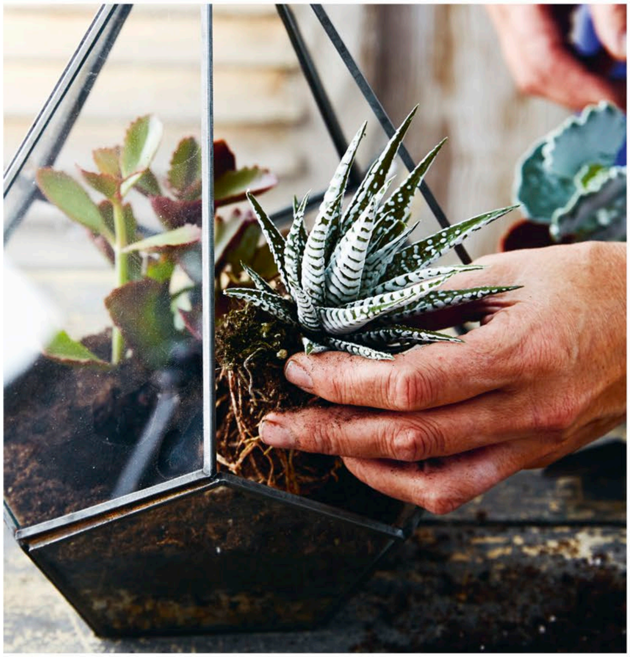
2 Add a layer of cactus compost, approximately 5–7.5cm (2–4in) deep, on top of the gravel–charcoal mixture.



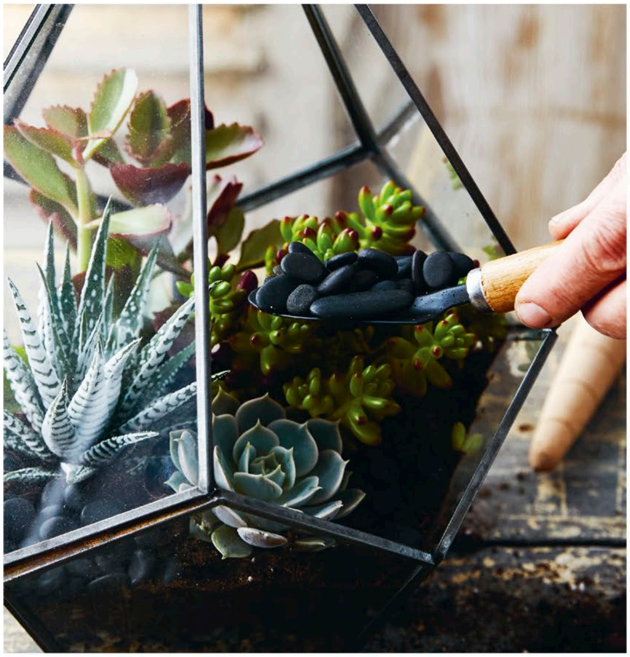
3 Select your focal plant and remove it from its pot. Gently loosen the roots to encourage growth.



4 Make a hole in the compost the same size as the root ball and gently place the plant in it. Use the dibber to firm the compost around the base of the plant.



5 Repeat this process with 2–3 smaller plants. Leave space between the plants to allow for both growth and good air flow. This will prevent a build up of humidity between the plants, which could lead to rot.



6 Once the plants are firmly in place, carefully place decorative pebbles on top of the compost using a spoon.

HOW TO MAINTAIN

WATERING Only water your display occasionally, when the compost completely dries out. The semi-enclosed space of the terrarium will retain moisture and create humidity, so take care not to overwater, as this may cause rot.

MAINTENANCE AND CARE Place your terrarium in indirect light; bright light could magnify within the glass container and cause the plants to overheat and dry out.

WOOD-MOUNTED ORCHID

Mounting an orchid on decorative wood makes a beautiful display and can be beneficial to your orchid's health. It mimics how the orchid would grow naturally and allows for good drainage and ventilation to the roots, which will help your plant to thrive and prevent disease.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANTS

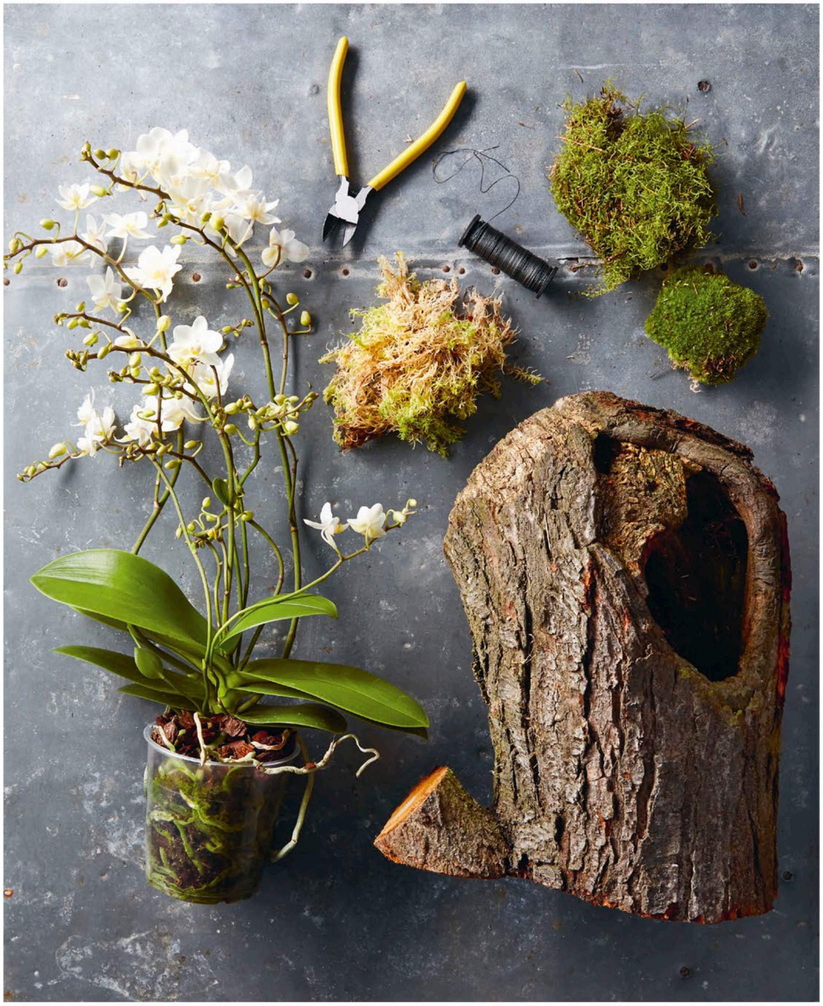
- Small orchid, such as a moth orchid or nobile dendrobium
- Spahgnum and bun mosses

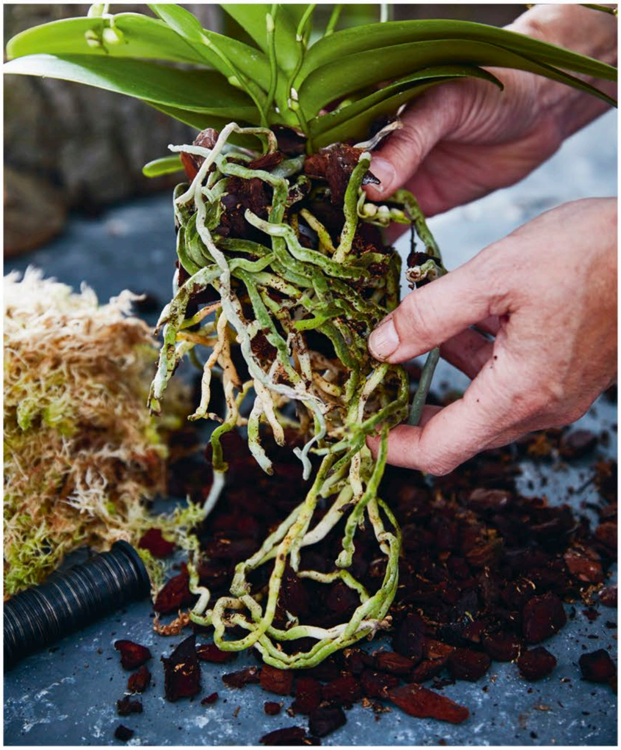
OTHER MATERIALS

- Decorative piece of wood, such as driftwood, tree bark, cork bark, or birch pole
- Florist's wire

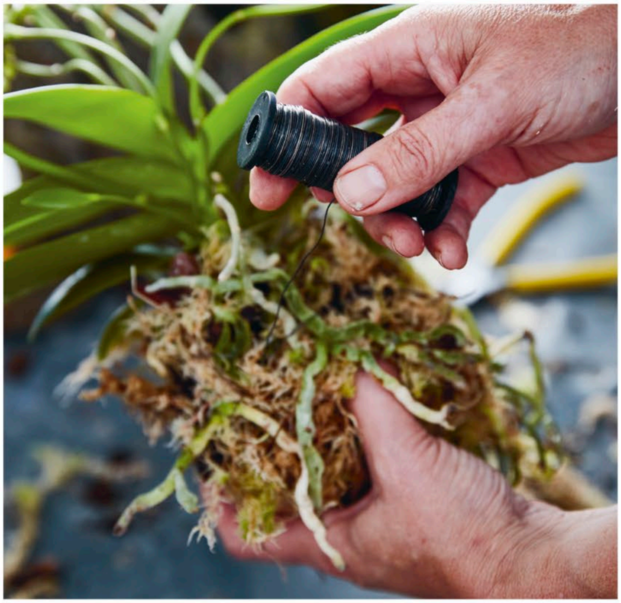
TOOLS

- Wire cutters

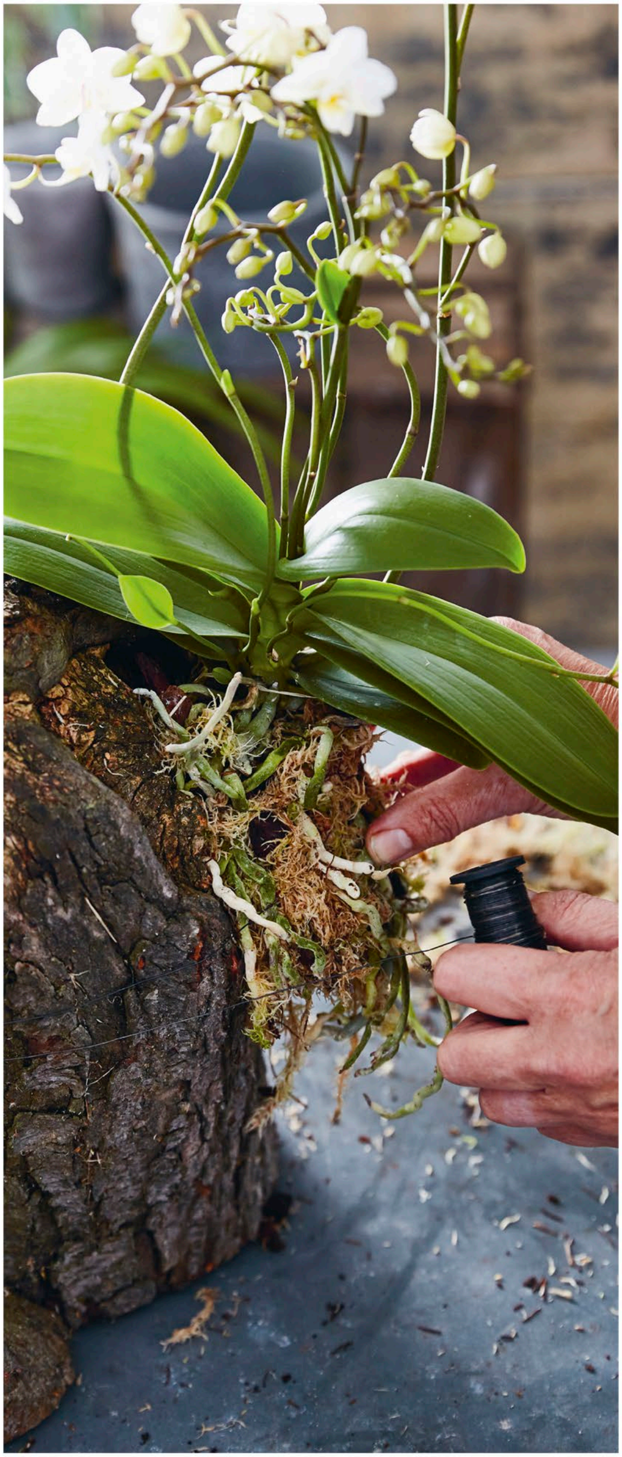




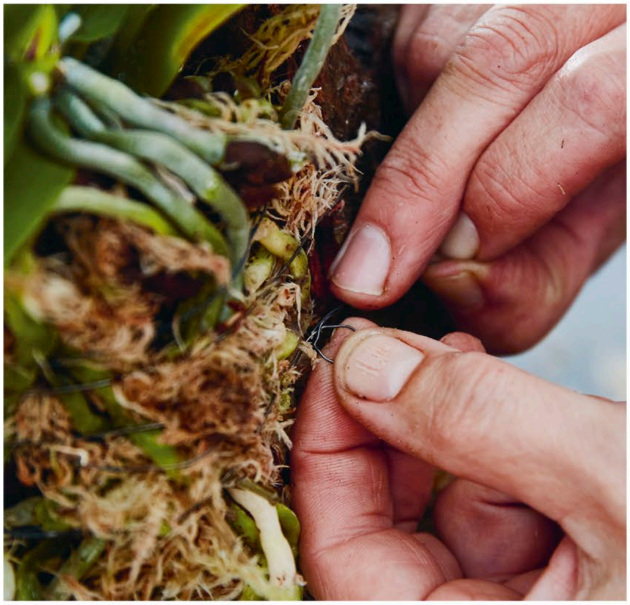
1 Remove the orchid from its pot and carefully tease the potting medium from its roots.



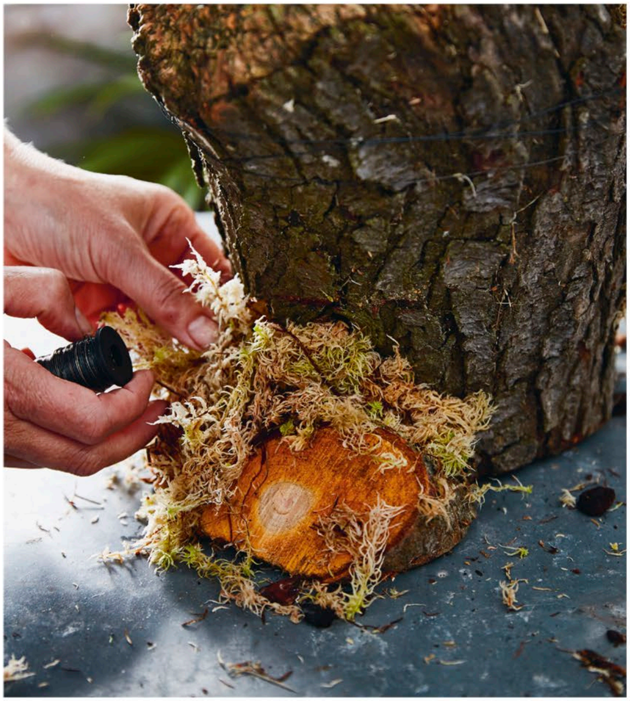
2 Pack sphagnum moss evenly in and around the roots of the orchid, leaving some outer roots partially exposed. Gently secure in place with a little wire.



3 Position the orchid on the piece of wood with the plant's crown angled downward. Wrap the wire around the base and roots of the orchid to secure it to the wood.



4 Take care not to wrap the wire around the orchid too tightly, as this could damage it. When the plant feels comfortably secure, twist the two ends of wire together and cut away the excess with wire cutters.



5 Decorate the rest of the piece of wood with additional handfuls of moss, using wire to secure them in place.

HOW TO MAINTAIN

TEMPERATURE 16–27°C (61–80°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate/High
CARE Easy

WATERING Orchids attached to mounts tend to dry out fairly quickly, so water at least three times a week. To water the plant, submerge the entire mount in a large, deep bowl for 20 minutes until completely saturated.

MAINTENANCE AND CARE Place in a humid area and mist daily. Leave the wire intact while the orchid's roots find secure purchase on the wood. The root moss will eventually fall away as the plant grows new roots and explores the wood's surface. Over time, the plant will develop the elegant, flattened shape characteristic of orchids found in the wild.

LIVING SPACE DIVIDER

A moveable trailing plant space divider can be used to create a beautiful temporary wall or living screen between different parts of your indoor space. Choose bushier plants to fill out the divider more completely, or show off a selection of decorative containers using macramé hangers (see pp60–63).

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANTS

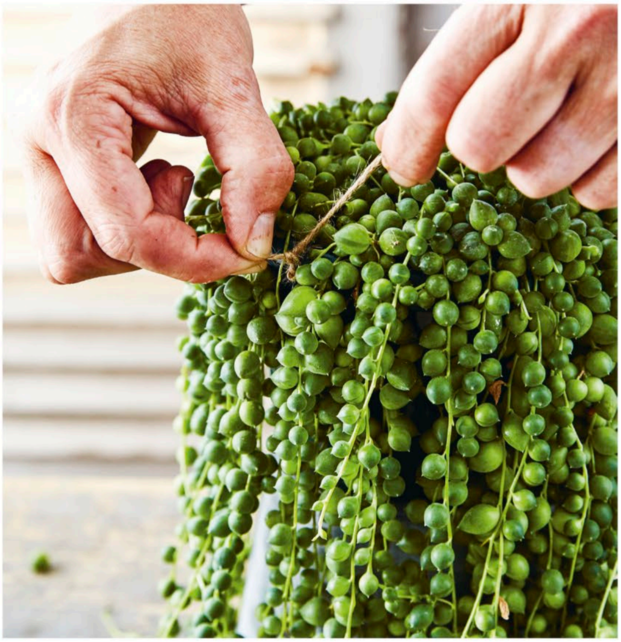
- Selection of trailing plants that prefer bright, indirect sun, such as string of pearls, string of hearts, and mistletoe cacti
- Selection of tall, mid-sized foliage plants with similar requirements, such as fiddle-leaved figs, spider plant, and most ferns

OTHER MATERIALS

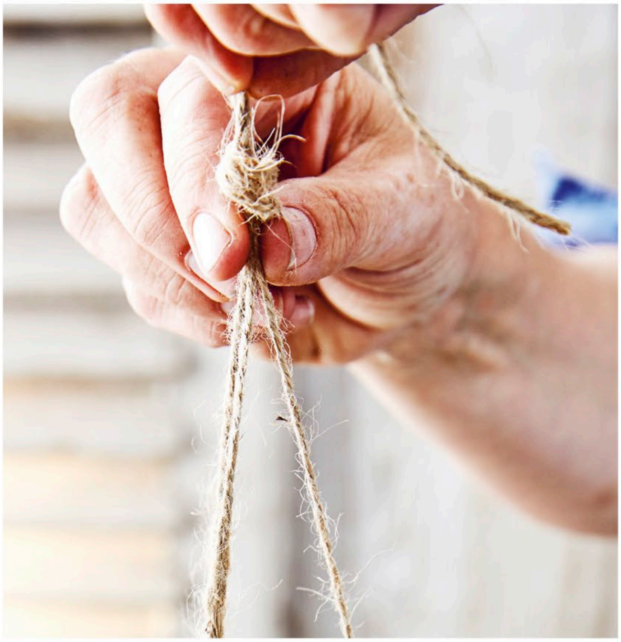
- Free-standing clothes rail, ideally with a lower shelf
- String
- S-hooks
- Decorative pot sleeves of appropriate sizes
- Macrame hangers
- Large pot or bucket

TOOLS

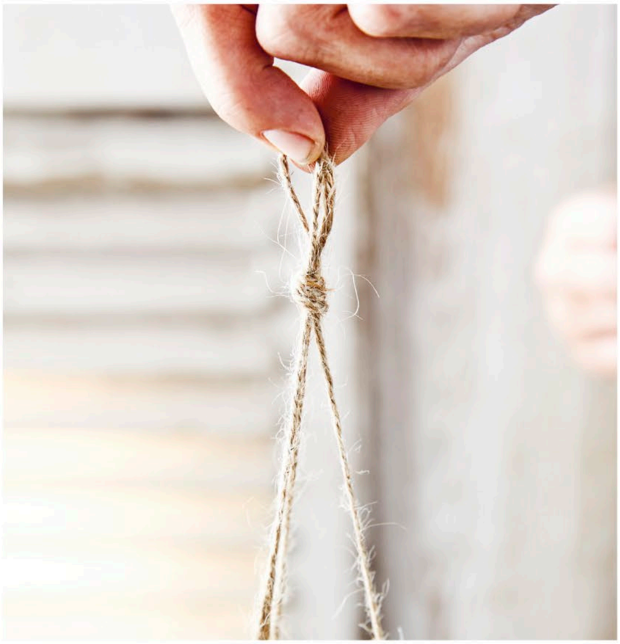
- Scissors
- Watering can



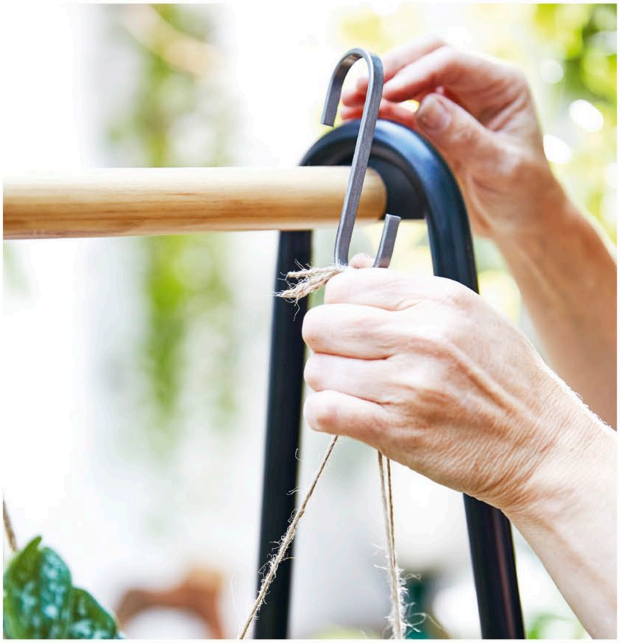
1 Select your first trailing plant. If its plastic pot is hidden by foliage, make 3 evenly spaced holes through the rim of the pot with a pair of scissors. Thread a length of string through each hole, securing each in place with a firm knot.



2 Gather the three strings together directly above the centre of the plant at the length from which you want the plant to hang from the rail. Tie a secure knot, leaving a short length of string above.



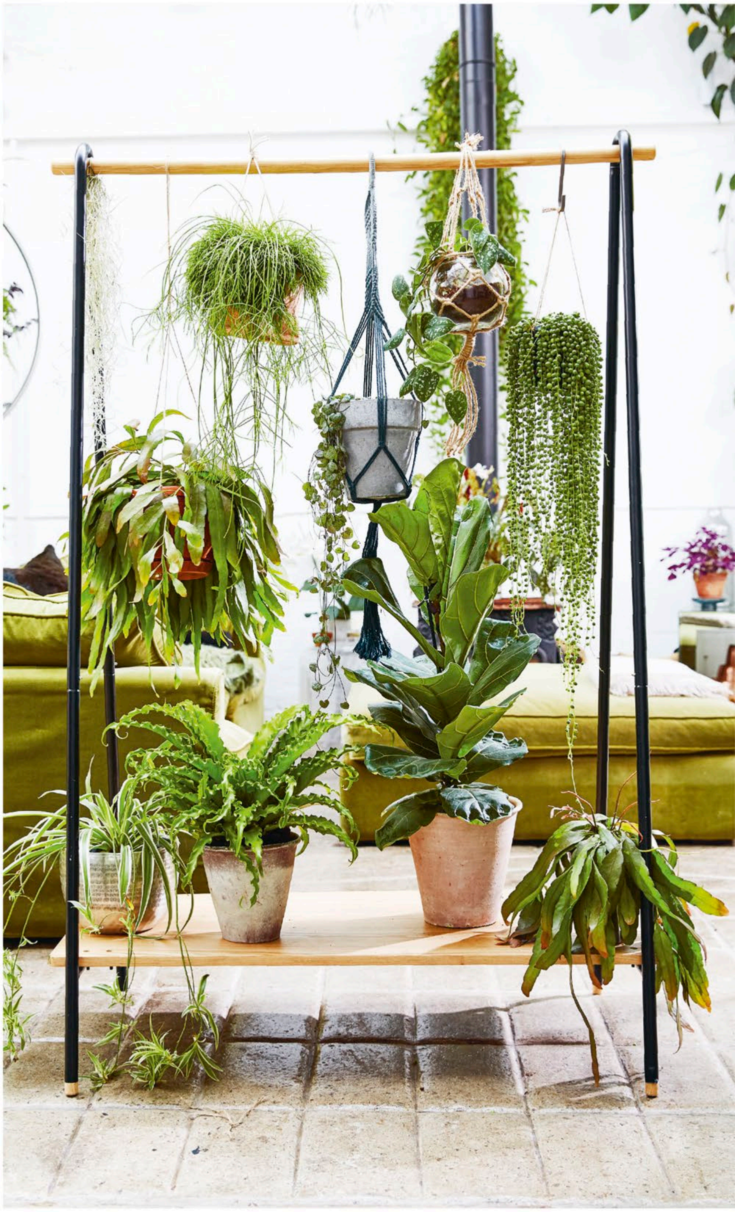
3 Form a small loop with the excess string, and tie it to the existing knot as tightly and neatly as possible. Trim any remaining string with scissors.



4 Slip the bottom curve of an S-hook through the loop and slowly lift the plant, checking that all the knots are secure. Clip the top curve of the S-hook over the bar of the clothes rail. Repeat for all the plants you wish to hang.

5 If you wish to hide a plastic pot from view, place the plant in a decorative sleeve and nestle it securely into a macramé hanger. Tie the hanger securely onto the rail, or use an S-hook to hold it in place.

6 Once the rail is full, fill the gaps beneath by arranging a second selection of plants on the shelf beneath. Try out different combinations of plants and decorative pots until you are happy with the final appearance of your living frame.



HOW TO MAINTAIN

WATERING Water and mist all plants as required. Remove plants from macramé hangers when watering them, to prevent saturating the decorative cord or rope (which could lead to rot over time).

MAINTENANCE AND CARE Wherever you position your room divider, ensure that the space is draught free. Prune plants as needed; swap them out if they grow too large for the display.

PROPAGATION SHELF

Rooting plants in water in pretty glass vessels makes a great display on a shelf or side table. You can make a temporary display while propagating offcuts to plant up later (see p204), or leave them as they are to create a permanent "water garden". This method is very simple, but not suited to all plants so choose your cuttings carefully.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANTS

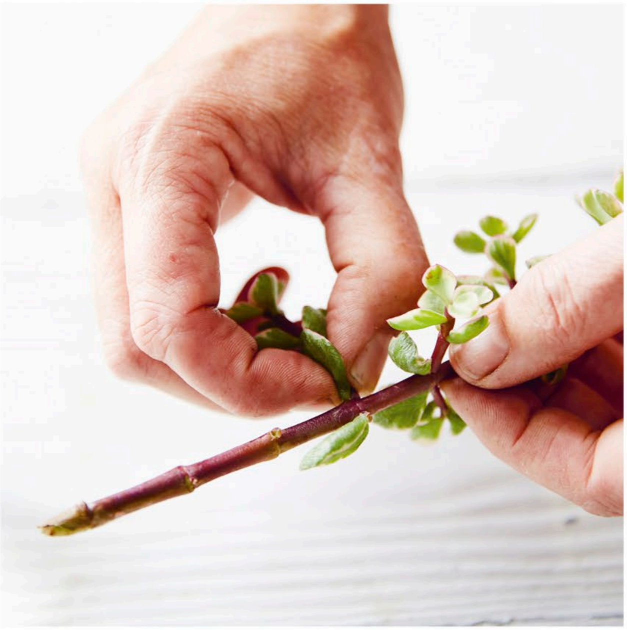
- Cuttings from mature, healthy plants, such as *Tradescantia*, *Philodendron*, *Crassula*, *Pilea*, *Epiphyllum*, *Begonia*, and *Chlorophytum*

OTHER MATERIALS

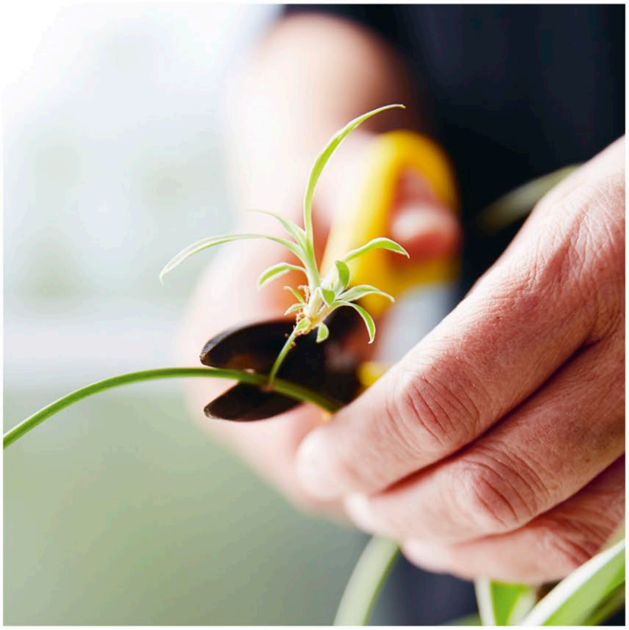
- Glass bottles or vases of different heights and shapes; flask-like vessels with narrow necks and large bodies work best
- Spring water, mineral water, or rainwater

TOOLS

- Small pair of pruning shears or scissors

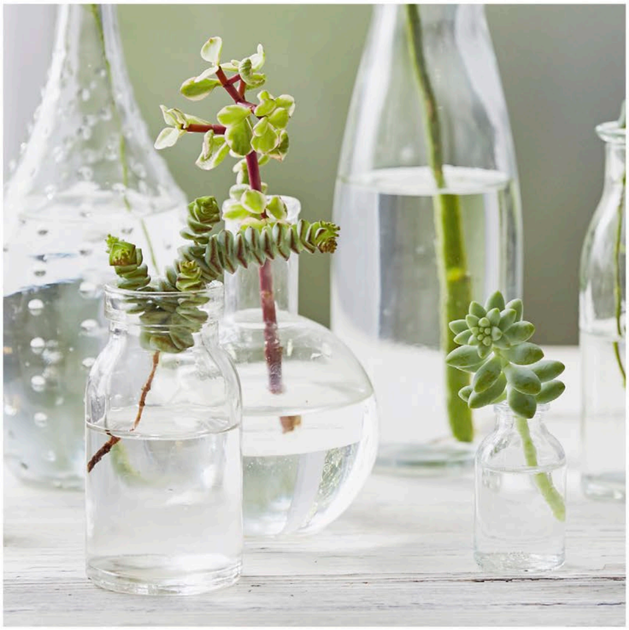


1 Select your first cutting. Measure it against the bottle in which you wish to display it, then remove any leaves from the portion of the stem that will be submerged in water.



2 If taking a cutting of a plant's offset, such as a "baby spider" from a spider plant (see p207), make the cut at the base of the offset's individual stem. This is where the rooting hormone is most concentrated in the plant.

3 Half-fill your bottle with rainwater or distilled water (do not use tap water). Make sure to use a glass bottle with plenty of room, so that the roots receive plenty of light and have space to grow.



4 Place the cutting in the vase and leave it, undisturbed, on your chosen propagation shelf. Repeat this process with your remaining cuttings, each matched to a proportionally sized glass bottle or vase, until your display is complete.

HOW TO MAINTAIN

WATERING Top up the bottles and vases with more water as and when needed.

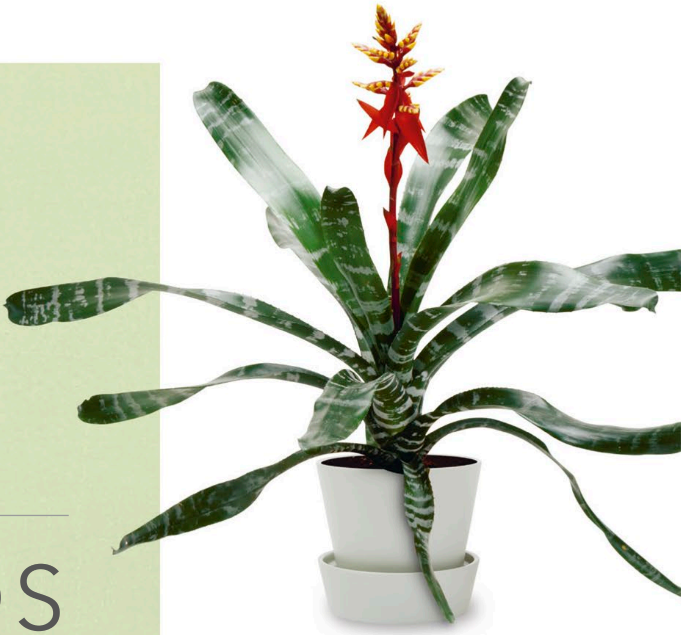
MAINTENANCE AND CARE After just a few weeks, your cuttings will begin to sprout roots. At this stage, if you want to plant your propagated cuttings, follow the instructions on p204.

You can also keep the cuttings permanently in water. If you choose to do so, remember to change the water or trim back the roots after a year or so.

PLANT PROFILES

BROMELIADS

These colourful plants bloom for many months and add a hint of the tropics to any bright room. They grow on trees in their native habitat, deriving moisture and nutrients from the air rather than soil, but they do not require exceptionally high humidity levels and are quite easy to care for. After blooming, the plants die back, but most bromeliads produce "baby" offsets (see pp206–07) next to the base of the old leaves, which then grow into new plants.



AMAZONIAN ZEBRA PLANT

Aechmea chantinii

TEMPERATURE 15–27°C (59–80°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 60cm (2 x 2ft)

This dramatic plant's dark green and silver striped leaves and tall flower spikes appear from late spring to autumn. The blooms are composed of red, orange, and yellow bracts (petal-like modified leaves) and small red flowers.

WATERING Fill the cup-like well in the centre of the leaf rosette with rainwater or distilled water; replenish every 4–8 weeks. Keep the compost moist, but allow it to dry out between waterings in winter. Mist the plant every day or two in hot weather.

FEEDING From spring to late summer, apply a half-strength balanced liquid feed every 2 weeks in the leaf well.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in an equal mix of orchid compost, perlite, and coir fibre (or a 50:50 mix of orchid and multipurpose compost) in a 12.5cm–15cm (5–6in) pot. Repot young plants in a container one size larger.

SILVER VASE PLANT

Aechmea fasciata AGM

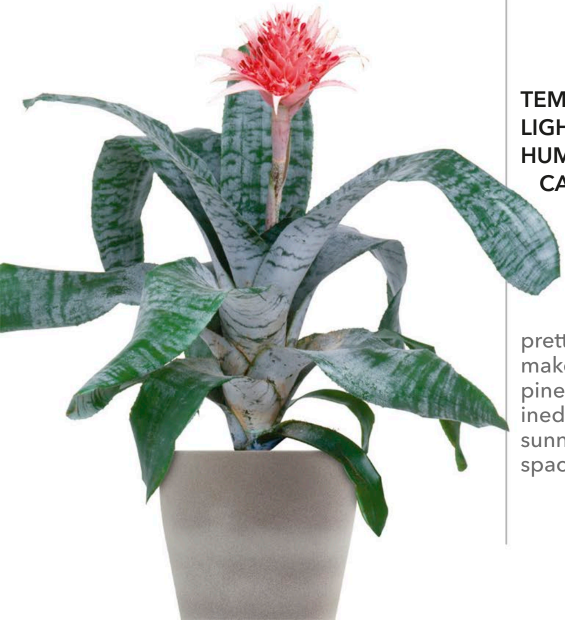
TEMPERATURE 15–27°C (59–80°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD
60 x 60cm (2 x 2ft)

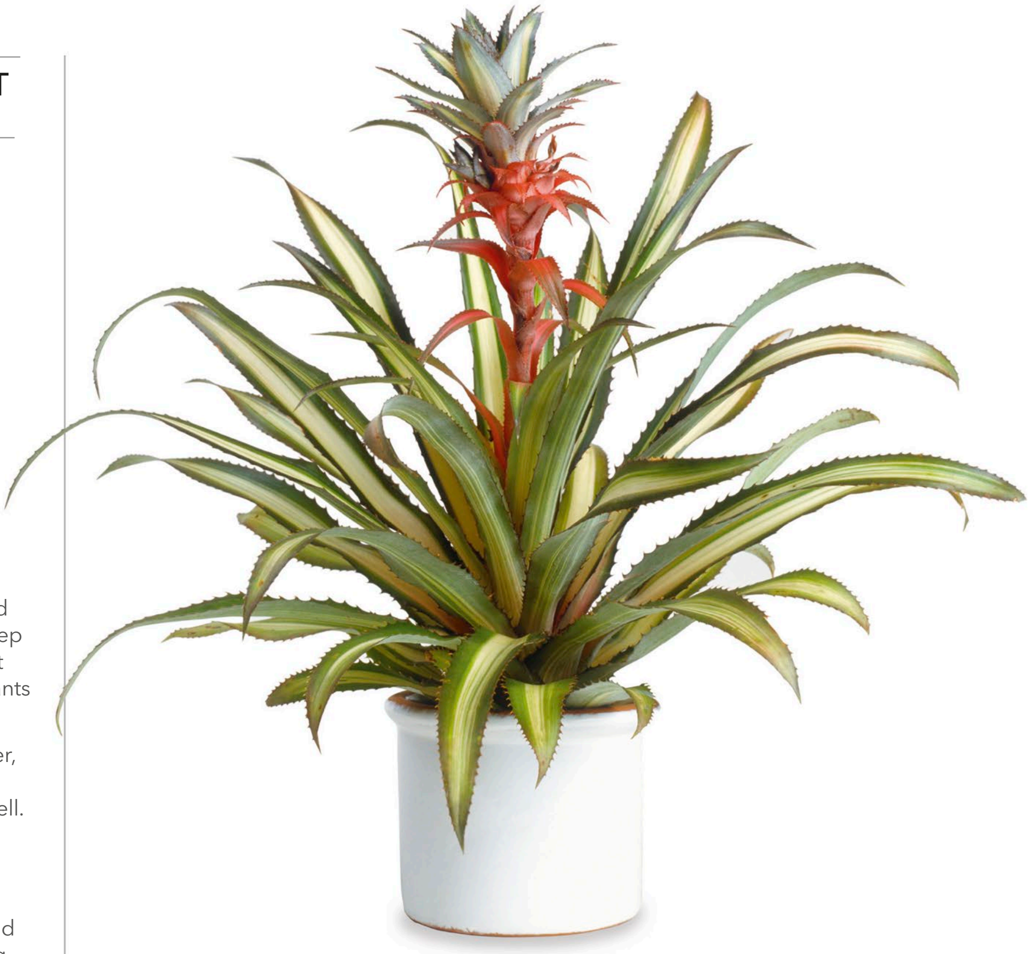
The elegant arching silver and green leaves offer reason enough to grow this beautiful plant. In summer, a tall flower spike appears, topped with delicate pink bracts and small purple flowers that add to its star quality.

WATERING Fill the well in the centre of the leaf rosette with rain or distilled water; replenish every 4–8 weeks. Keep the compost moist; allow it to dry out between waterings in winter. Mist plants every day or two in hot weather.

FEEDING From spring to late summer, apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks to the leafy well.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a 12.5cm–15cm (5–6in) pot in an equal mix of orchid compost, perlite, and coir fibre (or a 50:50 mix of orchid and multipurpose compost). Repot young plants in a container one size larger.





VARIEGATED PINEAPPLE

Ananas comosus var. *variegatus*

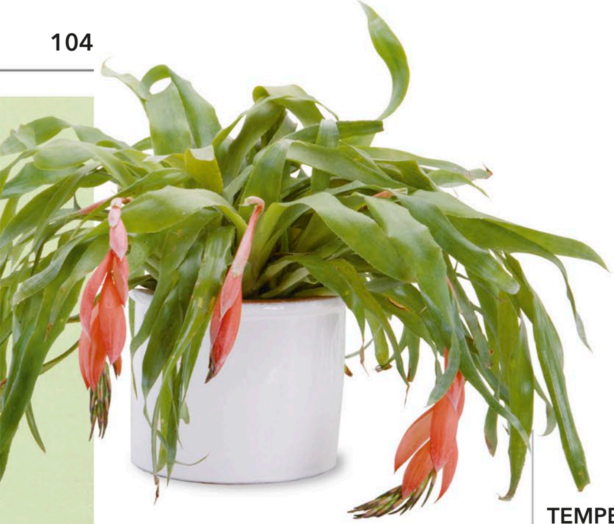
TEMPERATURE 16–29°C (60–85°F)
LIGHT Sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD At least 60 x 90cm (2 x 3ft)

Show-stopping, spiny-edged, green, and cream foliage and pretty yellow and purple flowers make up for the fact that this pineapple's red fruits are bitter and inedible. It will make a feature in any sunny room, but check that you have space for its wide, arching leaves.

WATERING Water frequently in spring and summer, but keep the compost just moist in winter. Mist daily or set on a tray of damp pebbles.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn and once a month in winter.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in an equal mix of fine composted bark or orchid compost, perlite, and coir fibre (or a 50:50 mix of orchid and multipurpose compost is ideal). A heavy 12.5–15cm (5–6in) pot will restrict the plant's size. Repot young plants in early spring.



FRIENDSHIP PLANT

Billbergia nutans

TEMPERATURE 16–27°C (60–80°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY High
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 60cm (2 x 2ft)

Set this bromeliad on a stand or in a hanging basket so that the graceful flowers can flow down over the edges. The plant's pink bracts (petal-like modified leaves) and small pink and purple blooms appear from late spring to summer among a fountain of grey-green strappy leaves.

WATERING Use rainwater or distilled water to keep the compost moist. In winter, allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings. Mist daily in summer; reduce to every few days in winter.

FEEDING In early spring, add a teaspoon of Epsom salts diluted in distilled or rain water to encourage flowering. Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every month in spring and summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in an equal mix of orchid compost, perlite, and coir fibre (or a 50:50 mix of orchid and multipurpose compost) in a 12.5–15cm (5–6in) pot. Repot young plants in early spring in a container one size larger.

EARTH STAR

Cryptanthus bivittatus AGM

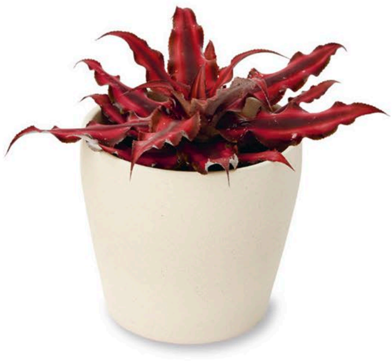
TEMPERATURE 16–27°C (60–80°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 15 x 15cm (6 x 6in)

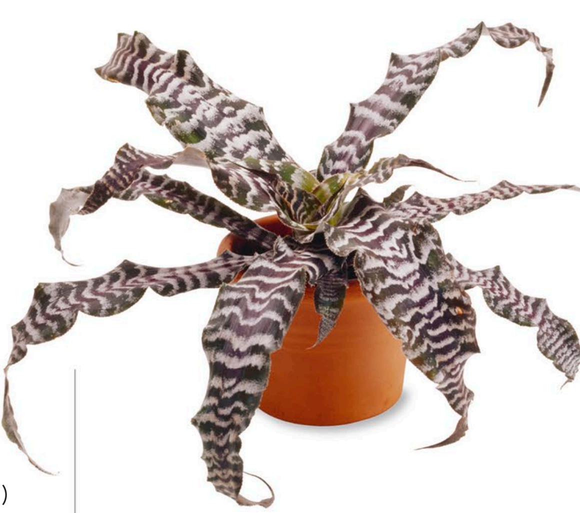
This dainty bromeliad is grown for its wavy, tooth-edged leaves, which form a flat star-shaped rosette. Ideal for decorating a sunny windowsill in a small room, the colourful foliage, which can be red, orange, purple, pink, or green, makes a sparkling feature.

WATERING In spring and summer, use rain or distilled water to keep the compost moist, but not wet. In winter, keep it just moist. Mist the plant regularly with tepid rain or distilled water.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2–3 months from spring to late summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a small 10cm (4in) pot in an equal mix of orchid compost, perlite, and coir fibre (or a 50:50 mix of orchid and multipurpose compost). Set in sun or filtered sun, and repot every 2–3 years in the spring.





ZEBRA PLANT

Cryptanthus zonatus

TEMPERATURE 16–27°C (60–80°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 25 x 40cm (10 x16in)

Prized for its striped, spidery-looking, burgundy and cream leaves, the zebra plant makes a dramatic focal point when set alongside other small leafy plants that like similar conditions. Small white flowers may appear in summer on mature plants.

WATERING From spring to early autumn, keep the compost moist with rain or distilled water. The compost should be just moist in winter. Mist with tepid rainwater or distilled water every few days.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2–3 months from spring to late summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in an equal mix of orchid compost, perlite, and coir fibre (or a 50:50 mix of orchid and multipurpose compost) in a small 10–12.5cm (4–5in) pot. Set in sun or bright filtered light; the plant may lose its variegations in shady conditions. Repot zebra plants every 2–3 years in spring.

SCARLET STAR

Guzmania lingulata

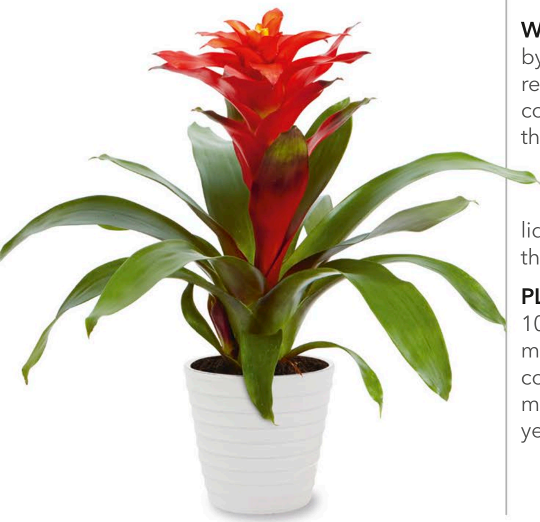
TEMPERATURE 18–27°C (65–80°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY High
CARE Challenging
HEIGHT & SPREAD 45 x 45cm (18 x 18in)

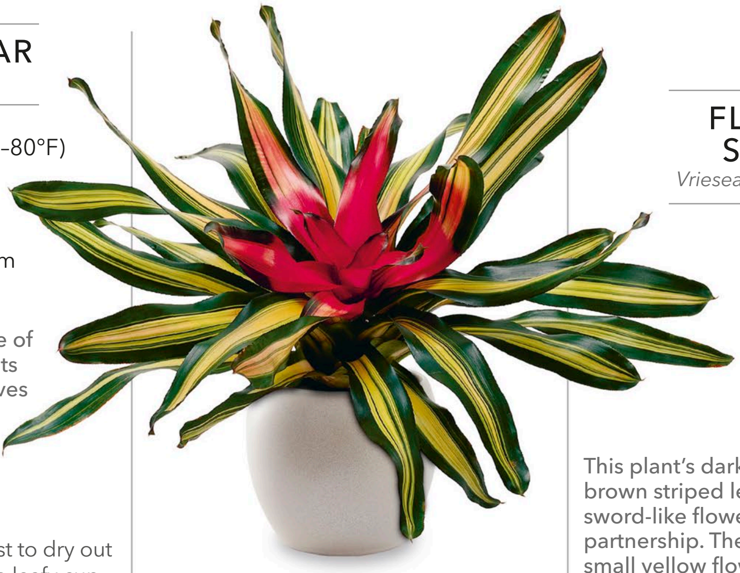
The eye-catching flower spike of this compact bromeliad shoots up from the glossy green leaves like a firework. Its small white or yellow blooms are protected by long-lasting bright orange or red bracts.

WATERING Allow the compost to dry out between waterings, and fill the leafy cup in the centre of the plant with distilled or rainwater, replenishing it every 4–7 days. Mist the leaves, flowers and aerial roots daily with distilled or rainwater.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced fertilizer to the central cup once a month. Pour this out after 4–5 days and replace with rain water. When not in flower, mist the leaves once a month with the same fertilizer, diluted to one-quarter strength.

PLANTING AND CARE Use an equal mix of orchid compost, perlite, and coir fibre (or a 50:50 mix of multipurpose and orchid compost) in a 10–12.5cm (4–5in) pot. Repot young plants each spring in fresh compost.





BLUSHING BROMELIAD

Neoregelia carolinae f. *tricolor*

TEMPERATURE 18–27°C (65–80°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate to high
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 30 x 60cm (12 x 24in)

Like a blushing bride, this plant's leafy rosette of green and yellow striped leaves is suffused with red at the centre. In summer, violet flowers and bright red bracts appear.

WATERING Fill the central well formed by the leaves with distilled or rainwater; replenish every 4–6 weeks. Keep the compost moist, but not wet, and mist the leaves every few days.

FEEDING Mist leaves monthly with a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer. Overfeeding reduces the leaf colour.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a small 10–12.5cm (4–5in) pot using an equal mix of orchid compost, perlite, and coir fibre (or a 50:50 mix of orchid and multipurpose compost). Repot every year in fresh compost.

FLAMING SWORD

Vriesea splendens AGM

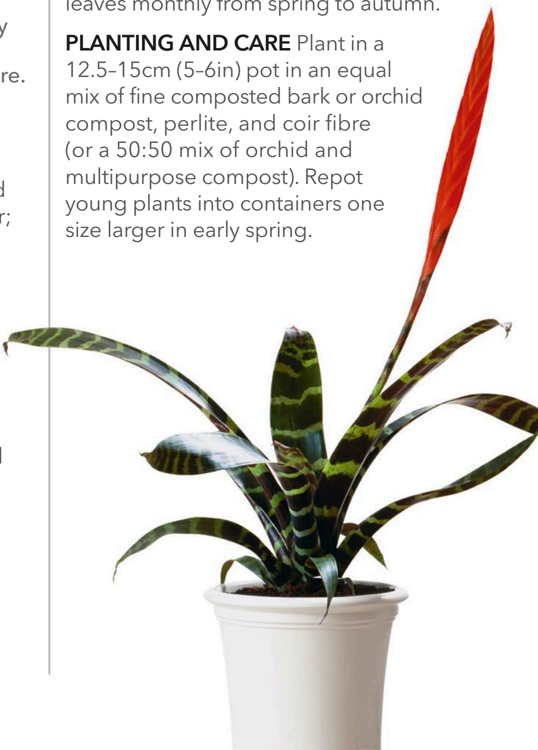
TEMPERATURE 18–26°C (64–79°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 45cm (24 x 18in)

This plant's dark green and reddish brown striped leaves and long-lasting sword-like flowers make a striking partnership. The scarlet bracts envelop small yellow flowers, and can appear at any time of year. This is a relatively easy bromeliad for beginners to try.

WATERING Top up the central well formed by the leaves with rainwater or distilled water; replish every 2–3 weeks. Water when the top of the compost feels dry; keep it just moist in winter. Mist every few days with rainwater or distilled water.

FEEDING Dilute a foliar fertilizer to a quarter strength and use to spray the leaves monthly from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a 12.5–15cm (5–6in) pot in an equal mix of fine composted bark or orchid compost, perlite, and coir fibre (or a 50:50 mix of orchid and multipurpose compost). Repot young plants into containers one size larger in early spring.



BULBOUS PLANTS

From tropical woodland plants to classic spring garden favourites, these flowers inject splashes of seasonal colour and scent into indoor displays. Although bulbs are often associated with spring, many bloom at other times of the year – even in winter – so, with a little planning, you can enjoy flowers in your home in every season. Just remember to plant the bulbs a few months before you want them to bloom.

NATAL LILY

Clivia miniata AGM

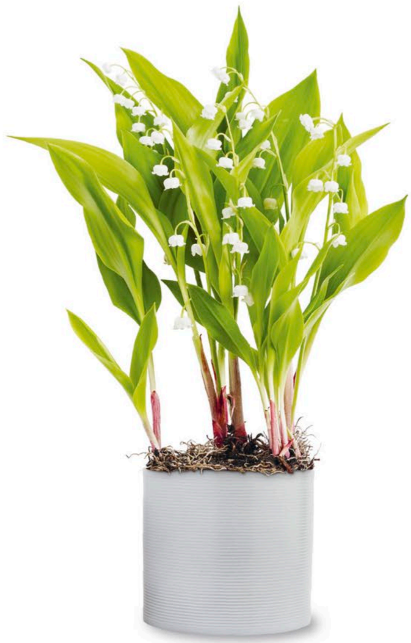
TEMPERATURE 10–23°C (50–73°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low to moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 45 x 30cm (18 x 12in)
WARNING! Bulbs are toxic

Brighten up your home in spring with the natal lily's sunny orange, yellow, or apricot flowers. The clusters of trumpet-shaped blooms last until summer, and these pretty woodland plants will thrive in a cool, bright room.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings from spring until autumn. Plants need a rest from late autumn to midwinter, when the compost should be kept almost dry.

FEEDING Feed with a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to early autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE In autumn, plant in a 50:50 mix of soil-based and multipurpose composts in a 20cm (8in) pot, with the neck of the bulbs above the surface. Plants need a cool rest at 10°C (50°F) from mid-autumn to late winter, then move to a well-lit room at 16°C (60°F) to bloom. Do not repot; it flowers best when cramped, so just replace the top layer of compost in spring.



LILY OF THE VALLEY

Convallaria majalis AGM

TEMPERATURE -20–24°C (-4–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 25 x 20cm (10 x 8in)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

This dainty bulb's white bell-shaped flowers will fill your home with sweet perfume when they appear in spring. The blooms are set off by bright green spear-shaped leaves.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from late winter to early summer; when dormant from late summer to early winter, allow the compost to dry out.

FEEDING Feed monthly with a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer from late winter to early summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant the bulbs, with the roots down, in a deep 15–20cm (6–8in) pot of soil-based compost, so they are just covered. See p199 to force them to flower indoors. When in bud, set in a cool room at 16–21°C (60–70°F) to bloom. After the leaves die down, plant in shade outside; they need a cold period to reflower.

SIAM TULIP

Curcuma alismatifolia

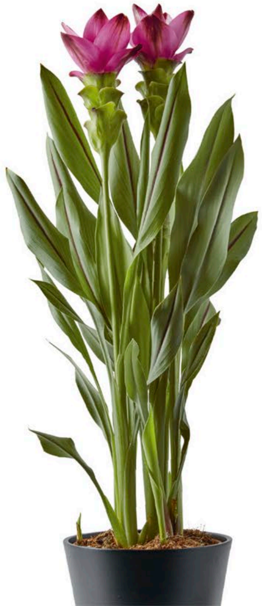
TEMPERATURE 18–24°C (65–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate to high
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 60cm (2 x 2ft)

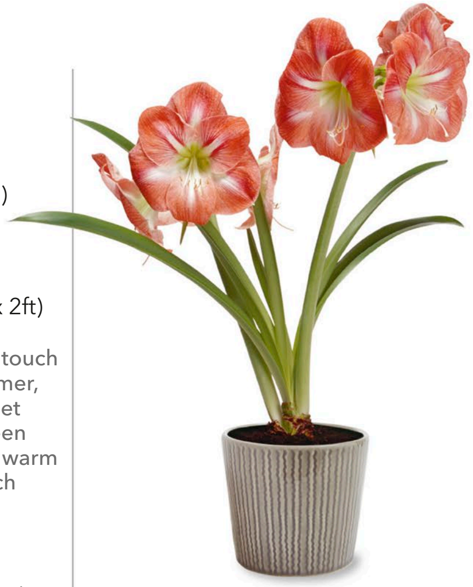
This beauty from Thailand brings a touch of the tropics to your home in summer, when its tulip-shaped pink and violet flowers appear on tall stems between dark green leaves. It will thrive in a warm room with high humidity levels, such as a bathroom or kitchen.

WATERING From late spring to late summer, keep the compost moist, and mist the plant regularly or set on a tray of damp pebbles. From mid-autumn to early spring, the plant becomes dormant (the leaves will die off), and the compost should be almost dry.

FEEDING Feed with a balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from mid-spring to late summer.

PLANTING AND CARE In spring, add a layer of gravel to a medium-sized 15cm (6in) pot, and top with a layer of bulb compost. Then plant the bulbs 7.5cm (3in) below the compost surface. Place in a bright area out of direct sun. Cut off old flower stems and dying leaves in autumn. Repot annually in spring in fresh compost.





AMARYLLIS

Hippeastrum hybrids

TEMPERATURE 13–21°C (55–70°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 30cm (2 x 1ft)
WARNING! Bulbs are toxic

Give this striking plant pride of place when its trumpet-shaped flowers appear from winter to spring. Choose from white, pink, red, and orange blooms, or varieties with bicoloured or patterned petals.

WATERING Water sparingly from early winter until the new leaves develop, then keep the compost moist while in bloom. Do not water when the plant is resting from late summer to late autumn.

FEEDING After flowering, apply a balanced liquid fertilizer until the foliage dies down in late summer or autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE In late autumn or winter, plant in multipurpose compost in a pot slightly larger than the bulb, with one-third of the bulb above the surface. Set in a bright, warm spot. Leaves, then flowers, appear 6–8 weeks later. Move to a cooler area when buds appear to prolong the flowering period. In late summer, let the bulbs dry out, repot, and set in a frost-free shed or garage for 2 months, then bring back indoors and resume watering.

HYACINTH

Hyacinthus orientalis

TEMPERATURE -15–20°C (5–68°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 25 x 20cm (10 x 8in)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

The intense perfume and rich colours of this classic spring-flowering bulb make it a favourite for indoor displays. Plant prepared hyacinth bulbs in autumn to enjoy the spikes of blue, purple, white, pink, or red blooms when they open a few months later.

WATERING After planting the bulbs, water the compost and leave to drain. Keep just moist throughout winter, and then consistently moist when the shoots and flowers appear.

FEEDING Apply a liquid seaweed feed every 2 weeks when the leaves are dying down, if you want to keep the bulbs.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant bulbs in pots of bulb fibre (or a 2:1 mix of soil-based compost and sharp grit) in early autumn, with the pointed ends up and just showing above the surface. Leave outside on a balcony, or in the garden until ready to flower in mid-spring. To force bulbs, see pp198–99.

GRAPE HYACINTH

Muscari species

TEMPERATURE -15–20°C (5–68°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 20 x 10cm (8 x 4in)

This easy-to-grow bulb is a top choice for spring colour, with its dainty little cones of lightly fragrant blue, purple, or white flowers and grassy foliage. These bulbs can be forced for early-season displays indoors.

WATERING Water bulbs after planting, and keep the compost almost dry in winter. The compost should be moist when the shoots and flowers appear.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks after flowering, while the leaves are dying down.

PLANTING AND CARE Fill a pot at least 15cm (6in) wide and deep with multipurpose compost. Plant the bulbs, pointed ends up, close together but not touching, and leave the tips just exposed. Set outside on a balcony or in a sheltered area until ready to flower, or force the bulbs for earlier display (see pp198–99). After blooming, set outside in shade; they will then reflower the following year.

DAFFODIL

Narcissus species

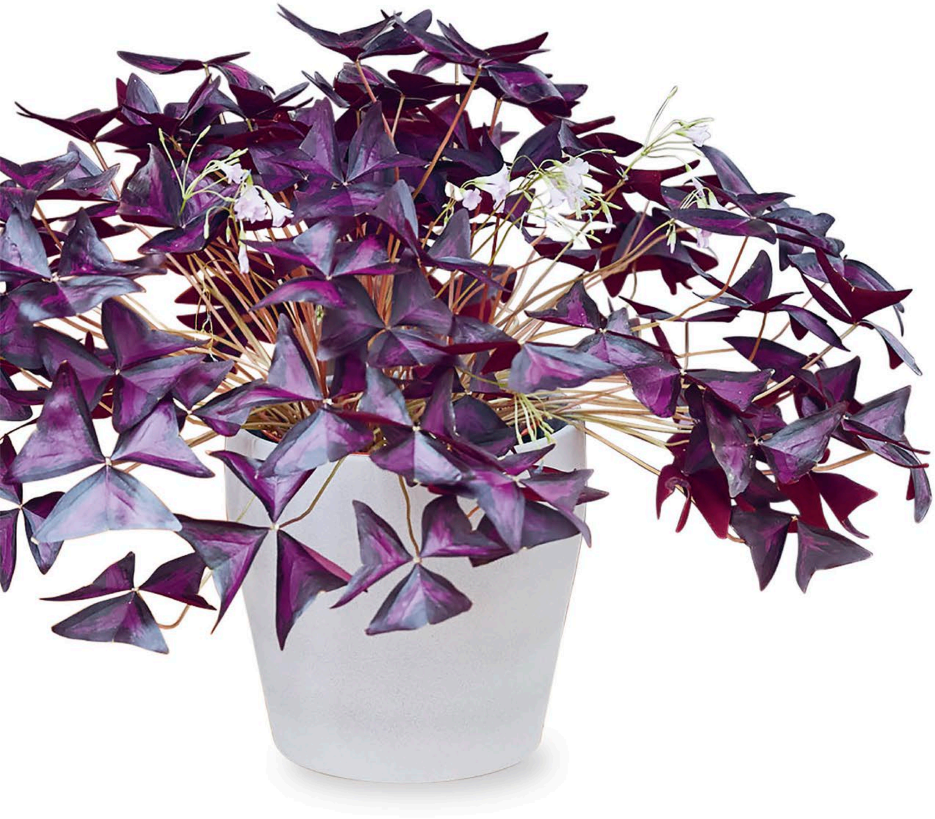
TEMPERATURE -15–20°C (5–68°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 40 x 10cm (16 x 4in)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

The most popular daffodil for indoor gardens is the tender, scented paperwhite, but other hardy *Narcissus*, such as the perfumed Tazetta varieties or popular ‘Tête-à-tête’, also flower well inside. Plant the bulbs in autumn for spring flowers.

WATERING Water bulbs after planting, and keep the compost just moist through winter. Water every few days when the shoots and flowers appear.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks after flowering, while the leaves are dying down.

PLANTING AND CARE Add a layer of gravel to the bottom of a wide pot, and top up with bulb fibre (or a 2:1 mix of soil-based compost and sharp grit). Plant bulbs, with the pointed ends up and the tips just below the surface. Set in an unheated room on a sunny windowsill.



FALSE SHAMROCK

Oxalis triangularis

TEMPERATURE 15–21°C (60–70°F)
LIGHT Light shade
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 30 x 30cm (12 x 12in)
WARNING! All parts are toxic to pets

The green, purple, or variegated leaves of this highly decorative plant resemble those of shamrock. The triangular leaves also perform a party trick, folding up at night and opening during the day. In addition to the foliage, sprays of small pink or white starry flowers appear over many weeks from spring to summer.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings. From autumn to winter, when the plant becomes dormant and the foliage starts to die off, refrain from watering. The plant may look dead, but if you then start watering again after 4–6 weeks, new leafy growth will soon reappear.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer every month when the plant is in growth from spring to late summer. Stop feeding during dormancy.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant the bulbs in autumn in a 15–20cm (6–8in) pot in an equal mix of soil-based compost, multipurpose compost, and horticultural grit. The bulbs should be 5cm (2in) below the soil surface. False shamrock is also frequently sold in leaf as a pot plant. Set in a lightly shaded spot, out of direct sun, from spring to autumn, and then move to a cool room in winter.

CALLA LILY

Zantedeschia species

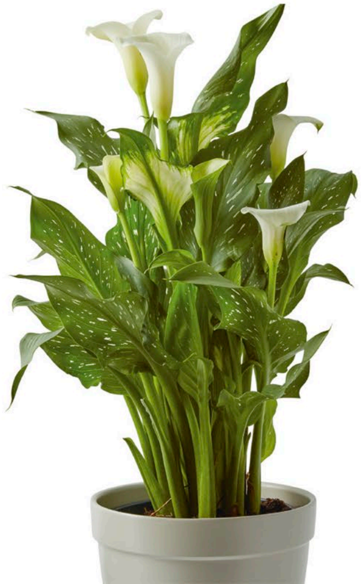
TEMPERATURE 10–20°C (50–68°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD up to 60 x 60cm (2 x 2ft)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

While the white arum lily (*Zantedeschia aethiopica*) is best grown outdoors, the smaller, often more colourful calla lilies, such as *Z. elliottiana* and *Z. rehmannii*, make beautiful house plants. They feature plain or spotted leaves and the flowers, which comprise yellow, pink, purple, dark red, or black spathes (petal-like sheathes) around a spike of tiny flowers, appear from spring to autumn.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from late spring to late summer; the compost should be almost dry in winter.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring until the flowers have faded.

PLANTING AND CARE In late winter, plant in a wide pot in multipurpose compost, with the rhizomes (large, oval bulbs) just showing above the surface, and the eyes (dark bumps) uppermost. Set in a warm spot in filtered sun. Leave foliage to die down in autumn. Repot in winter, and store in a cool place.



ORCHIDS

Prized for their exotic flowers, orchids come in a vast range of shapes and colours, and some also have scented blooms. The stars of any show, use one as a focal point in a bright room, or recreate their natural inclination to cling to trees by growing those with aerial roots on bark or a log (see pp88–91). While some of these divas demand lots of attention, others – most notably the widely available moth orchids (*Phalaenopsis)* – will thrive without too much fuss.

SPIDER ORCHID

Brassia species

TEMPERATURE 12–24°C (55–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY High
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 1 x 1m (3 x 3ft)

Like colourful spiders crawling along arching stems, the unusual blooms of this orchid comprise long, thin, yellow or green petals, with brown or maroon stripes or spots, attached to a rounded central lip. The spidery flowers also have a delicious spicy scent and appear in late spring and summer, while the pseudobulbs (swellings at the base of the stems) each produce two or three long, strap-shaped green leaves.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings in spring and summer. Partly submerge the pot in a tray of rainwater or distilled water for half an hour, then leave to drain. In winter, the plant needs a rest and should be kept drier, watering just enough to prevent the pseudobulbs from shrinking. Mist the leaves daily from spring to late summer, and stand the pot on a tray of damp pebbles, or install a room humidifer.

FEEDING Apply a specialist orchid fertilizer with every other watering from midspring, when new growth emerges, to late summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant the spider orchid in a 10–20cm (4–8in) clear pot in specialist orchid compost (or a 6:1:1 mix of composted bark, perlite, and charcoal). Do not cover the aerial roots, which should be left exposed to the light. Set in a bright position, out of direct summer sun and away from draughts, and provide good ventilation. Cut the flower spike down to just above the first node (bump on stem) after blooming. The orchid likes to be cramped, so only repot when growth starts to suffer.

CYMBIDIUM

Cymbidium species and hybrids

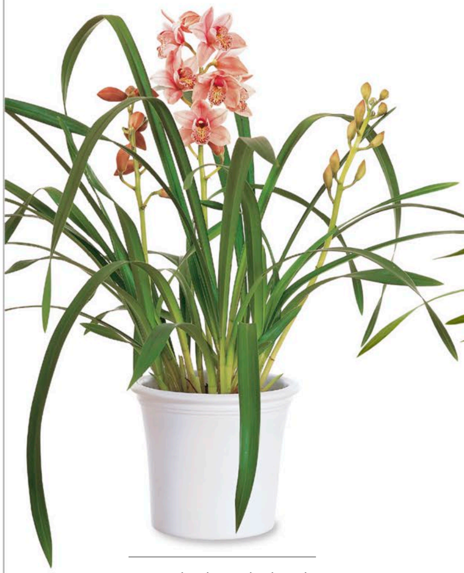
TEMPERATURE 10–24°C (50–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 60cm (2 x 2ft) for miniatures, and 1.2 x 0.75m (4 x 2½ft) for standards

This free-flowering orchid will brighten up your home from late autumn to spring, when few other plants are at their best. The stems of large blooms emerge from between strap-shaped green leaves, creating an explosion of colour. The named hybrids are easier than the species, and there are two types to choose from: large "standards" that can grow up to 1.2m (4ft), and the smaller, more popular, "miniatures", which are ideal for a windowsill.

WATERING In spring and summer, allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings, and water from above with rainwater or distilled water, making sure that any excess can drain away. Reduce watering to once every 2 weeks in winter. Place on a tray of damp pebbles or mist every few days.

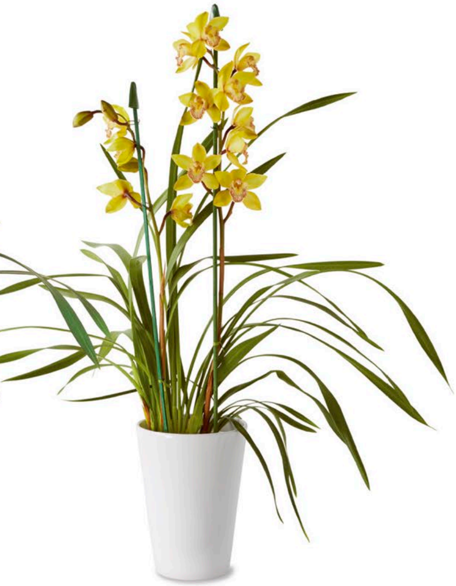
FEEDING Apply a half-strength general liquid fertilizer with every third watering in spring, then switch to a specialist orchid fertilizer throughout summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a 15–20cm (6–8in) opaque pot in specialist orchid compost (or a 6:1:1 mix of composted bark, perlite, and charcoal). This ground-dwelling orchid does not have aerial roots, and does not need a clear pot. Stand in filtered sunlight all year, out of direct summer sun. Ideally, set it on a part shaded patio outdoors in summer and early autumn (before the frosts), when plants need a distinct drop between day and night temperatures to form flower buds. In late autumn, keep in a cool room, ideally below 15°C (59°F); bring into a slightly warmer room to flower. Repot every year or two in spring.



Cymbidium hybrid

Named hybrids are the most widely available and easy to care for. Choose from the huge range of flower colours, many with patterned or spotted petals.



Cymbidium miniature

Miniature cymbidiums are compact hybrids, ranging in height from 30 to 60cm (12–24in). Like all cymbidiums, they need a cool room to flower well.

NOBILE DENDROBIUM

Dendrobium nobile hybrids

TEMPERATURE 5–24°C (40°–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate to high
CARE Challenging
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 45cm (24 x 18in)

Upright cane-like stems of scented flowers appear from autumn to early spring on this flamboyant orchid. Those with pink or white flowers are the most popular, but they come in a wide range of colours. Be prepared to pamper it, and do not worry if the plant loses some leaves in winter, as it is a semi-deciduous.

WATERING From spring to late summer, water once or twice a week in the morning using tepid rainwater or distilled water (see *Brassia* watering method on p110). Reduce watering to every 2 weeks in early autumn to stimulate flower buds to form; in winter, do not water but mist occasionally to prevent the pseudobulbs (swellings at the base of the plant) from shrivelling. Set on a tray of damp pebbles from early spring to late summer.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid feed every 2–3 weeks from spring to summer. In late summer, change to a half-strength high potash fertilizer for one month, then discontinue feeding until the following spring.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant this orchid in a 15–20cm (6–8in) clear pot in specialist orchid compost (or a 6:1:1 mix of composted bark, perlite, and charcoal). Grow in a bright spot, out of direct summer sun, and away from draughts. To bloom, this dendrobium needs a distinct difference between day and night temperatures, and it is best grown outside in semi-shade from summer to early autumn (before the frosts). In winter when blooming, keep it in an unheated room with a night-time temperature of about 10°C (50°F) or slightly lower. Repot every year in spring.

Dendrobium nobile 'Star Class Akatsuki'

This brighly coloured orchid produces spikes of dazzling fuchsia-pink flowers with white and yellow centres.

Dendrobium nobile 'Star Class Apollon'

One of the popular clear white forms of nobile dendrobium, it forms tall spikes of small, long-lasting blooms.

PANSY ORCHID

Miltoniopsis hybrids

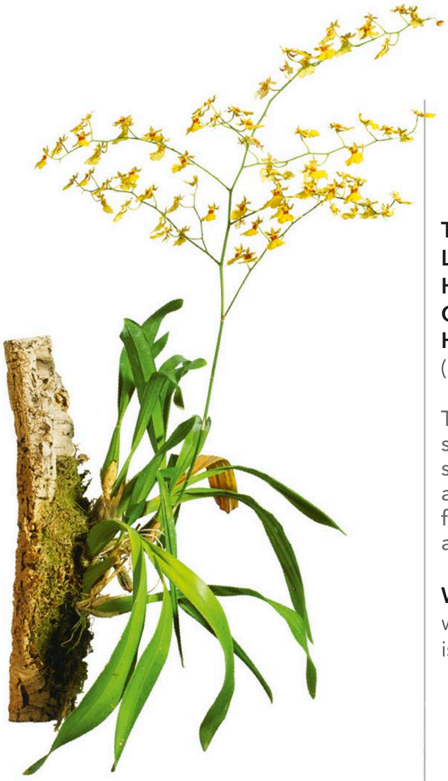
TEMPERATURE 12–27°C (54–80°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY High
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 60cm (2 x 2ft)

Often labelled as Miltonia (hybrids of *Miltoniopsis*), this compact orchid produces large, fragrant blooms with distinctive pansy-like markings on the face, hence its common name. The flowers can appear in spring or autumn, depending on the hybrid.

WATERING In the summer, apply rainwater or distilled water every day or two from above, giving the plant a good soaking, and then leaving it to drain. In winter, reduce watering to once every 2–3 weeks. Set on a tray of damp pebbles and mist every few days.

FEEDING Apply a specialist orchid fertilizer every 2 weeks, but flush the plant with plenty of rainwater or distilled water once a month to prevent a build-up of salts.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a 15–20cm (6–8in) clear pot in specialist orchid compost (or a 6:1:1 mix of composted bark, perlite, and charcoal). The pansy orchid will be happy in light shade in summer; move closer to the window in winter. Avoid direct sun and draughts, and repot annually in spring.



BUTTERFLY ORCHID

Oncidium hybrids

TEMPERATURE 13–25°C (55–77°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 60 x 60cm (2 x 2ft)

The stems of this dainty orchid hold dozens of small flowers that look like butterflies or dancing ladies, creating a spectacular effect, usually in autumn. The hybrids are relatively easy, and can be mounted on bark or slate.

WATERING Apply rainwater or distilled water when the top of the compost is slightly dry. In winter, water just once a month. Set on a tray of damp pebbles, and mist every day or two.

FEEDING Apply specialist orchid fertilizer, diluted to a quarter strength, with every second or third watering.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow on bark, or in a 12.5–15cm (5–6in) opaque pot in specialist orchid compost. It likes to be cramped, so repot only when the pot becomes too small for the new growth.

NELLY ISLER

× *Oncidopsis Nelly Isler* gx

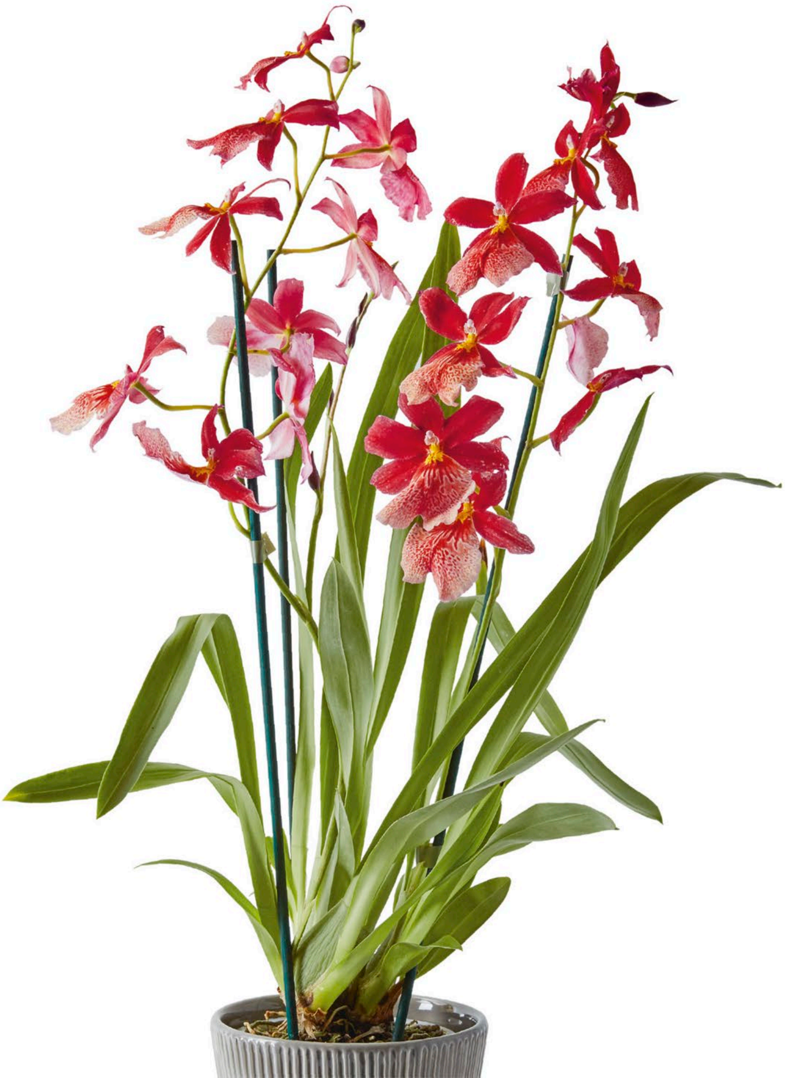
TEMPERATURE 16–24°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY High
CARE Challenging
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 50 x 50cm (20 x 20in)

This orchid hybrid is prized for its tall stems of bright red flowers with white spotted lips and a yellow eye. Blooms appear at any time of year, but most flower in autumn, and they have an intense lemony fragrance.

WATERING Using rainwater or distilled water, apply when the top of the compost is slightly dry (see watering method for *Brassia* on p110). In winter, reduce watering slightly. Set on a tray of damp pebbles and mist every day or two.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength orchid fertilizer every 2 weeks year round.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a 15–20cm (6–8in) clear pot in specialist orchid compost. Stand out of direct sun, in temperatures of 16–24°C (60–75°F). After flowering, trim the stems to just above the lowest node (bump on stem) to encourage a second flush. Repot every year or two in spring.



SLIPPER ORCHID

Paphiopedilum 'Maudiae Femma'

TEMPERATURE 17–25°C (63–77°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 30 x 20cm (12 x 8in)

This orchid has great allure, and features large showy flowers in a wide range of colours, with a distinctive slipper-like pouch that gives rise to its common name. The blooms generally appear for many weeks from winter to early summer, although some hybrids flower at other times too. The long green or mottled leaves form a fan shape, and provide interest while the plant is not in flower. Named hybrids are easier than the species to look after.

WATERING Using rainwater or distilled water, keep the compost moist from spring to autumn, applying water once or twice a week (see *Brassia* watering method on p110). Reduce watering in winter but do not let the compost dry out completely. Set on a tray of damp pebbles to raise humidity levels, but do not mist, as this may lead to rotting.

FEEDING Apply specialist orchid fertilizer every 2–3 weeks from spring to autumn; in winter apply it at half strength at the same frequency.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow the slipper orchid in a 15–20cm (5–8in) opaque pot in specialist orchid compost (or a 4:1 mix of finely composted bark and perlite). This **ground-dwelling orchid does not need a clear pot, as it produces no aerial roots.** Grow in light shade in summer, out of direct sun, and in full light in winter. The plain green-leaved like orchids like cool conditions; the more widely available mottle-leaved types need warmth, with a minimum of 17°C (64°F) at night. Repot annually after flowering in a slightly larger container, making sure new growth is not buried.

MOTH ORCHID

Phalaenopsis hybrids

TEMPERATURE 16–27°C (61–80°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 90 x 60cm (3 x 2ft)

One of the most widely available and easiest orchids to grow, the moth orchid produces long arching stems topped with large round blooms in a huge range of colours, some with delicate patterning. The flowers can appear at any time of the year. There are also miniature hybrids for small spaces and all types are happy in high daytime winter temperatures and will grow well in a centrally heated home.

WATERING Keep the compost moist at all times and apply water every 5–7 days in the morning (ideally use rainwater or distilled water in hard water areas). Reduce watering slightly in winter but do not let the compost dry out

Phalaenopsis hybrid

Many orchids are not named when you buy them, but the most widely available will be easy-care hybrids. Simply choose colours to suit your scheme, and team up matching hues.

completely. Set on a tray of damp pebbles; mist plants occasionally in the morning, which allows excess water to dry before the colder nights.

FEEDING Apply a specialist orchid fertilizer with each watering, but flush through the plant with plain water and no fertilizer once a month to remove excess salts. Reduce feeding to once a month in winter.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a 10–15cm (4–6in) clear pot in specialist orchid compost (or a 6:1:1 mix of composted bark, perlite, and charcoal). Do not bury the aerial roots, which need to be exposed. Set in light shade in summer; bring closer to a bright window in winter. Avoid draughts and major temperature fluctuations; these orchids prefer warmth year-round. After flowering, cut the stem just above the lowest node (bump on stem) to encourage a second flush. Repot every 2 years in a slightly larger container.

Phalaenopsis So Petit range

This group of miniature hyrbid moth orchids comes in a range of colours, including pink, peach, and white, and they fit neatly onto a windowsill.

VANDA ORCHID

Vanda hybrids

TEMPERATURE 16–32°C (61–90°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY High
CARE Challenging
HEIGHT & SPREAD 1.2 x 0.6m (4 x 2ft)

This tropical orchid is demanding, but its large colourful blooms, often patterned and up to 15cm (6in) in diameter, make the effort worthwhile when they appear in spring and summer. Vandas need very high levels of humidity, and they are commonly grown in a vase or an open wire basket without compost.

WATERING Water every morning by plunging the roots into a bucket of tepid rainwater or distilled water for 15 minutes until the roots go green, then drain; reduce to every 3–4 days in winter. Vandas demand high humidity and should be misted a few times a day; alternatively, install a humidifier.

FEEDING Mist the leaves and roots once a week with a ready mixed orchid fertilizer spray. Feed every 2 months in winter.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a slatted basket or in a large clear vase with no potting compost. Set in a bright spot, out of direct summer sun, but in good light in winter. A heated, well-ventilated conservatory or bathroom is ideal. Lower night-time temperatures in autumn encourage flower buds to form. To repot, soak the roots and gently pull them away from sides of the basket, then place the plant in its small basket into a larger basket; the roots will then grow on without disturbance.

CAMBRIA ORCHID

× *Vuylstekeara Cambria* gx 'Plush'

TEMPERATURE 10–24°C (50–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY High
CARE Challenging
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 50 x 35cm (20 x 14in)

While this beautiful hybrid orchid is not widely available, it is worth seeking out if you like a challenge. The rewards for your efforts are tall arched stems of large, dark red, fragrant flowers, with white spotted lips and a yellow eye. The long-lasting blooms appear at any time of year, but mostly in winter or spring.

WATERING Apply rainwater or distilled water when the top of the compost is slightly dry (use the method described for *Brassia* on p110) and water every 5–7 days from spring to autumn, and every 7–10 days in winter. Set on a tray of damp pebbles and mist the leaves every day or two, or install a room humidifier.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength orchid fertilizer with every second or third watering year round.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a 10–20cm (4–8in) clear pot in specialist orchid compost. To promote flowering, make sure there is a 6°C (10°F) drop in temperature at night. After flowering, trim back the stems to just above the lowest node (bump on stem) to encourage a second flush of blooms. Repot only when the pseudobulbs (swellings at the base of the stems) fill the container completely.

OTHER FLOWERING PLANTS

While many house plants produce flowers, some are grown specifically for their beautiful blooms, and can be used to inject seasonal colour into a green leafy display. This selection includes plants that bloom at different times of the year, and some that even flower in the depths of winter.

FLOWERING MAPLE

Abutilon × hybridum

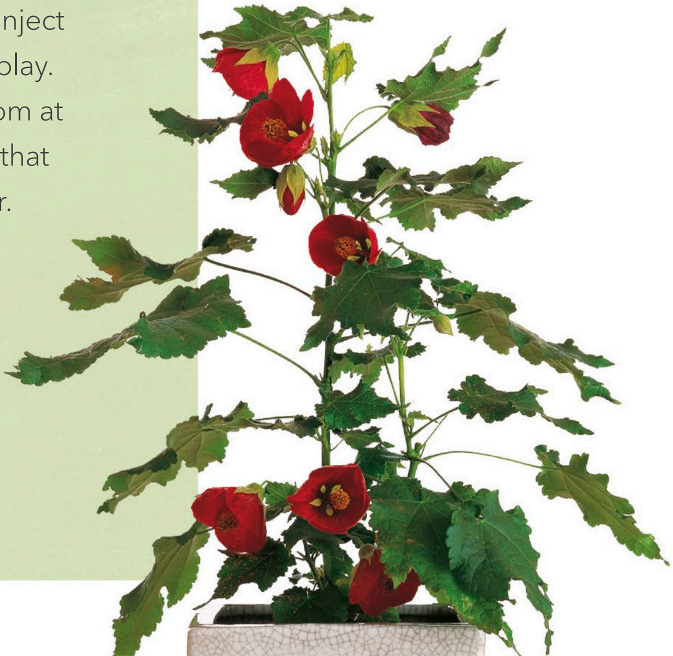
TEMPERATURE 12–24°C (54–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 90 x 60cm (36 x 24in)

Dress up your home with this tall shrub's large bell-shaped flowers, which come in a variety of colours, including red, yellow, pink, and white. The maple-like green or variegated foliage provides a foil for long-lasting summer blooms.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn; in winter, allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks between spring and autumn, replacing it in summer with a high-potash feed.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in an equal mix of multipurpose and soil-based composts in a 20–30cm (8–12in) pot. Set in a bright position, and move in winter to a cooler room with daytime temperatures of 16–20°C (61–68°F). Trim back stems and pinch out the tips in spring to create a bushier, compact plant. Prune again in autumn if necessary. Repot every 2 years.



TAIL FLOWER

Anthurium andraeanum AGM

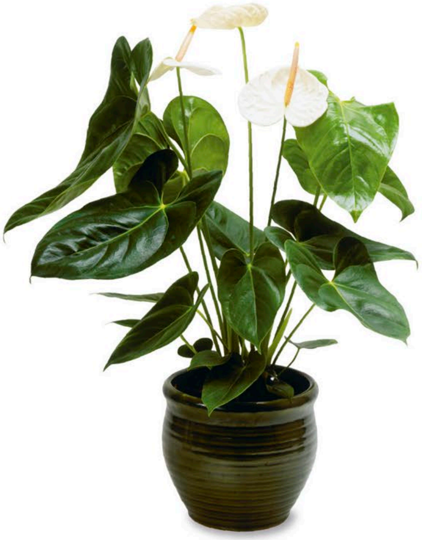
TEMPERATURE 16–24°C (61–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 45 x 30cm (18 x 12in)

This top-performing house plant sports dramatic, arrow-shaped, dark green leaves, and elegant waxy flowers which appear throughout the year. It is best displayed in simple, modern pot, and the blooms, which come in white, red, pink, and a fashionable dark burgundy, are made up of a tear-shaped spathe (leaf-like sheath) and a long spadix (spike of tiny flowers). As well as its stylish good looks and obvious charm, the tail flower, or flamingo flower as it is sometimes known, is also quite easy to grow.

WATERING Keep the compost moist throughout the year; avoid waterlogging, which may rot the roots. Mist every few days, or set on a tray of damp pebbles.

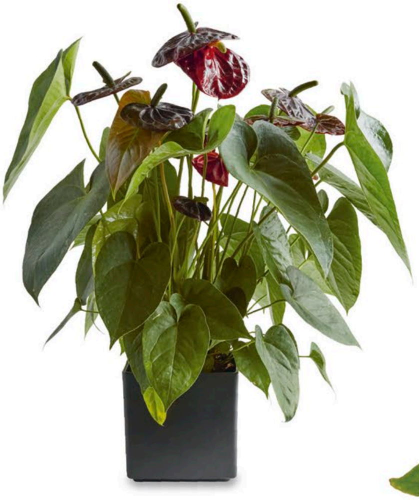
FEEDING Feed every 2 weeks from spring to summer with a half-strength, high-potash liquid fertilizer.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant with the top of the root ball just above the soil surface in a 12.5–20cm (5–8in) pot and an equal mix of multipurpose and soil-based composts. Cover the root ball with moss to prevent it drying out. Stand in bright filtered light and keep at 20–24°C (68–75°F) all year round. Repot only when plant has become root-bound.



Anthurium andraeanum – white form

Most tail flower species produce bright red flowers, but the cooler, sophisticated white forms are also very popular and widely available.



Anthurium andraeanum 'Black Queen'

The fashion for dark blooms has led breeders to produce flowers in a range of sultry single shades, from burgundy to near black, and moody bicolours.

ANGEL'S TRUMPET

Brugmansia × candida

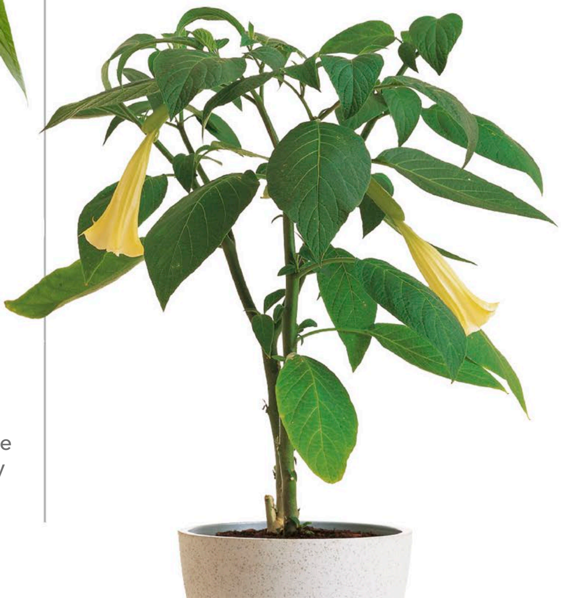
TEMPERATURE 16–25°C (61–77°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 1.2 x 1m (4 x 3ft)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

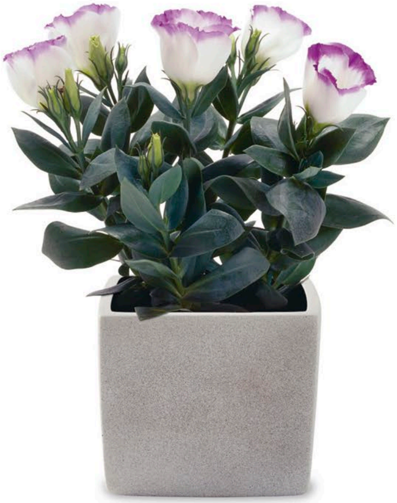
The knock-out evening fragrance and large, showy, trumpet-shaped flowers of this tall plant make it a favourite for a conservatory or big, bright room. The blooms come in yellow, pink, white, or red, but the plant has one major vice – all parts are poisonous, so it is not a good choice for those with children or pets. You may also see it sold as *Datura*.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to early autumn; reduce watering so that the compost is just moist in winter when temperatures are lower.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer every month in spring; switch to a high-potash feed in summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a 20–30cm (8–12in) pot in soil-based compost. Set in a sunny spot and a cool room in winter. Wearing gloves, trim the stems after flowering to keep it compact, but do not prune too hard or you may lose the flowers. Repot every 2–3 years.





PRAIRIE GENTIAN

Eustoma grandiflorum

TEMPERATURE 12–24°C (54–75°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 30 x 45cm (12 x 18in)

The cup-shaped blooms of this pretty annual are often used in floristry, but the plant can also be grown as a house plant, adding temporary colour to a mixed display in spring and summer. The flower are available in a wide range of colours, including purple, pink, white, and bicolours. Look out for compact varieties, which are sometimes sold as garden bedding plants.

WATERING Keep the soil moist from spring to autumn, but avoid overwatering.

FEEDING Apply a high-potash fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant prairie gentian in a container about 15–20cm (6–8in) wide in multipurpose compost. Young plants bought in spring will grow rapidly if set in a sunny position, protected from strong midday sun in summer. Pinch out the tips of the stems in spring to create a bushier plant with more flowers, and deadhead faded blooms regularly. Buy new plants each year.

PERSIAN VIOLET

Exacum affine AGM

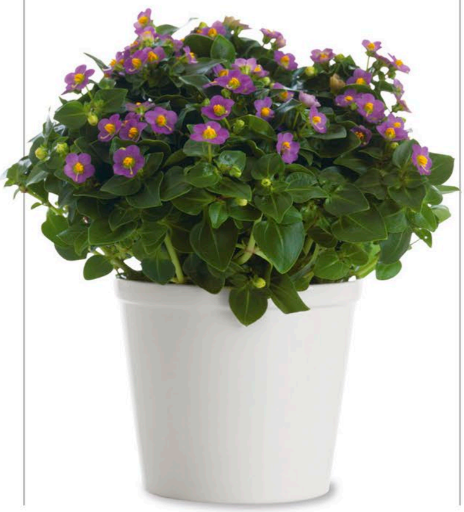
TEMPERATURE 18–24°C (65–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate to high
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 20 x 20cm (8 x 8in)

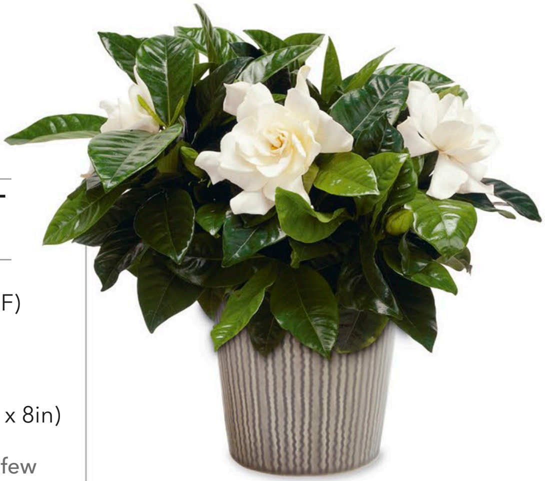
This plant may only perform for a few months, but its fragrant, violet-blue flowers with yellow centres, which appear over many weeks above a mound of glossy green leaves, make it well worth growing. It is a biennial, which means it produces leaves in the first year, and blooms in the second, but those you buy will flower the same year.

WATERING Keep the compost moist – the flowers fade quickly if the roots are dry. Mist with tepid water every day or two, or set on a tray of damp pebbles.

FEEDING Feed every 2 weeks from spring to late summer with a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer.

PLANTING AND CARE You will probably not need to repot the plants, but if yours is root-bound (see pp192–93), transfer it to a slightly larger pot of multipurpose compost. Try growing it from seed in winter or early spring (see pp208–09).





CAPE JASMINE

Gardenia jasminoides AGM

TEMPERATURE 16–24°C (61–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY High
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 60cm (2 x 2ft)
WARNING! All parts are toxic to pets

This shrub's main appeal is its large, round, sweetly scented white flowers, which appear in summer and autumn against a backdrop of glossy, dark green leaves. It can grow into a large plant in warm, frost-free climes but rarely reaches more than 60cm (2ft) tall when grown indoors in a pot.

WATERING From spring to autumn, water with tepid distilled or rainwater, keeping the compost moist. In winter, allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings. Mist the leaves (not the flowers) regularly, or stand on a tray of damp pebbles.

FEEDING From spring to late summer, apply a half-strength fertilizer designed for acid-loving plants every 2 weeks.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow cape jasmine in a 20–30cm (8–12in) pot in ericaceous compost. Place in a bright spot, out of direct sun and draughts. To prevent the buds failing, it needs temperatures of 21–24°C (70–75°F) by day and 15–18°C (59–65°F) at night in summer. In winter, move to a sunny window. Repot every 2–3 years in spring.

AFRICAN DAISY

Gerbera jamesonii

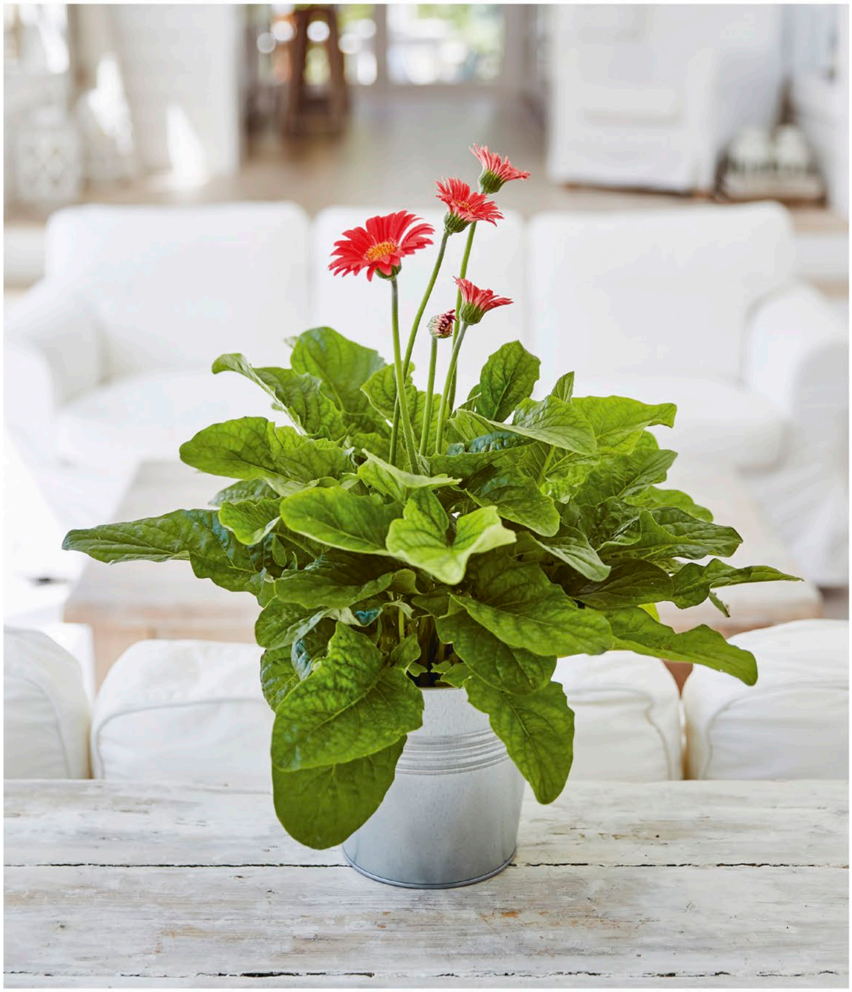
TEMPERATURE 13–24°C (55–75°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low to moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 60 x 60cm (2 x 2ft)

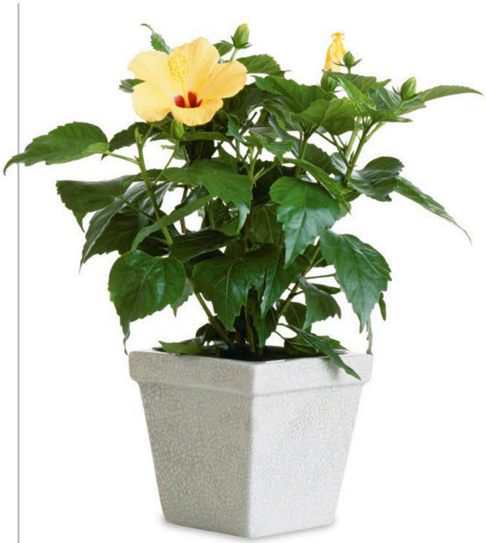
Often used in floral bouquets, African daisies make a statement with their tall flower stems topped by colourful daisy-like blooms and triangular, slightly lobed, bright green leaves. Flowers appear mainly in summer, but given a warm home and enough light, they can bloom intermittently all year round.

WATERING Keep the compost moist, but not wet, from spring to summer. Reduce watering in winter, allowing the top of the compost to dry out between waterings.

FEEDING Feed every 2 weeks from spring to late summer with a balanced liquid fertilizer.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a 12.5–15cm (5–6in) pot in an equal mix of multipurpose and soil-based composts. Set in a bright, cool, well-ventilated area, out of midday sun in summer. If night-time temperatures do not drop below 10°C (50°F), gerberas will often flower all year round. Repot when root-bound.





ROSE OF CHINA

Hibiscus rosa-sinensis

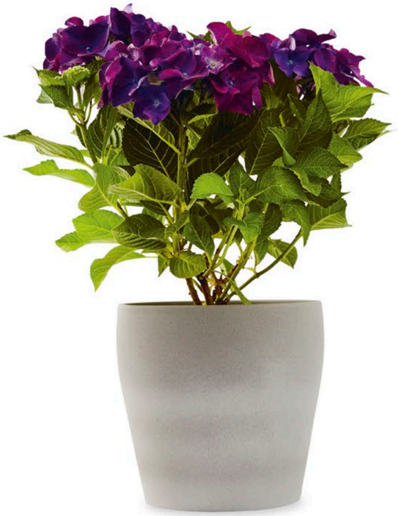
TEMPERATURE 10–26°C (50–79°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 1 x 2m (3 x 6ft)

Large, trumpet-shaped flowers and lush green foliage create a colourful show in summer, when this vase-shaped shrub is at its best. In warm rooms with good light, flowers may open at other times of the year too. The blooms come in a range of colours, including white, red, yellow, or orange, most with a dark red throat in the centre of each bloom.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn; allow the top to dry out between waterings in winter. Mist regularly or stand on a tray of damp pebbles.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid feed every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a large 20–25cm (8–10in) pot in house plant compost (or an equal mix of soil-based and multipurpose composts). Place in bright light, but out of direct sun in summer, and away from draughts. Prune hard in spring to keep plants compact. Replace the top layer of compost each spring, and repot every 2–3 years.



MOP-HEAD HYDRANGEA

Hydrangea macrophylla

TEMPERATURE -10–21°C (14–70°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 1 x 1m (3 x 3ft)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

Although this large shrub will not be happy long-term indoors, it will make a beautiful house plant for a couple of years, brightening up a dull interior with its apple-green deciduous leaves, and large flowerheads in summer.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn; use rainwater or distilled water for blue varieties. Keep the compost just moist in winter.

FEEDING In spring and summer, apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a 20–25cm (8–10in) pot in ericaceous compost if you have a blue variety, or soil-based compost for other colours. Place in bright filtered light in a cool room or hallway. Move to a shed or garage over winter; bring indoors again in spring. Prune stems lightly in early spring. After a year or two, plant in the garden or in a large patio pot outside.

BUSY LIZZIE

Impatiens 'New Guinea' hybrids

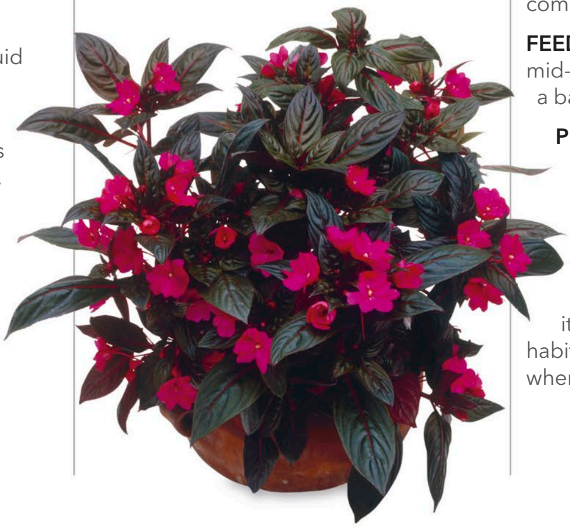
TEMPERATURE 16–24 (60–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 20 x 30cm (8 x 12in)

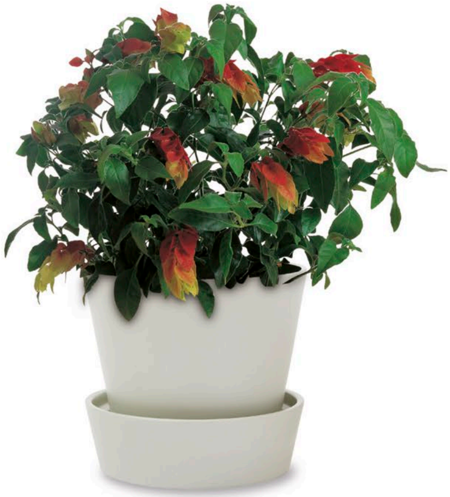
Dark green or bronze-tinged foliage and a profusion of round flowers in shades of pink, lilac, red, white, or orange, make a beautiful combination in this exotic form of the more common busy lizzie. It can be grown outside in summer, but also makes a good house plant, injecting splashes of bright colour from late spring to autumn.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn; allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings in winter.

FEEDING Apply a high-potash fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a medium-sized 12.5–15cm (5–6in) pot in multipurpose compost; these plants like cramped conditions so do not choose an overly large container. Set in a bright position out of direct sunlight, and deadhead the flowers regularly to prolong the blooming period. Take stem cuttings in autumn, or sow seed or buy new plants each spring.





SHRIMP PLANT

Justicia brandegeeana AGM

TEMPERATURE 15–25°C (60–77°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 60cm (2 x 2ft)

This unusual Mexican houseplant makes an intriguing talking point, with its coral and yellow flowers that resemble little shrimps, hence the name. The blooms comprise small white flowers wrapped in colourful bracts (modified petal-like leaves), and appear throughout the year between the spear-shaped leaves.

WATERING Ensure the compost is moist in spring and summer; in winter, allow the compost to dry out between waterings.

FEEDING Feed every 2 weeks from mid-spring to early autumn with a balanced liquid fertilizer.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a medium-sized 15–20cm (6–8in) pot in soil-based compost. Set in a bright position, but protect from the midday sun in summer. This plant benefits from a hard prune every spring, which keeps it compact and creates a bushier habit. Repot every 2–3 years in spring when root-bound.

YELLOW SAGE

Lantana camara

TEMPERATURE 10–25°C (50–77°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered light
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 1 x 1m (3 x 3ft) in a pot

Small round clusters of flowers adorn this potentially large shrub from spring to late autumn. It may remind you of holidays in the Mediterranean or California, where it is often grown in pots outside. The flowers come in a range of colours, including pink, red, yellow, and cream. Large plants can be trained into standards to keep them compact or you can buy a dwarf variety.

WATERING Keep the compost moist in the growing season from spring to autumn, and only just moist in winter.

FEEDING Feed monthly from spring to autumn with a balanced liquid fertilizer.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a large 20–30cm (8–12in) pot in 3:1 mix of soil-based compost and grit, and set in full sun. Prune the stems in winter if plants have outgrown their space, and repot root-bound plants every 2–3 years. Plants can also be grown from seed (see pp208–09).

ROSE GRAPE

Medinilla magnifica AGM

TEMPERATURE 17–25°C (63–77°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate to high
CARE Challenging
HEIGHT & SPREAD up to 1.2 x 1m (4 x 3ft)

Native to the tropical forests of the Philippines, this spectacular plant will create a dazzling display when it flowers in summer. Long arching stems hold large pendent blooms made up of pink bracts and small, violet flowers and seeds. The wide-spreading, dark green, oval-shaped leaves with bold vein patterns add further interest. It is best grown in a tall pot or on a stand, so that the flowers can flow over the sides.

WATERING Water sparingly from below by placing the pot in a tray of tepid rainwater or distilled water for 20 minutes, then lifting it out to drain. Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings, and reduce watering in winter after blooming until new flower stems appear in early spring. Mist the plant every day or two, or set on a tray of damp pebbles.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength, high-potash liquid feed every 2 weeks from spring to late summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant the rose grape in a 20–25cm (8–10in) pot in orchid compost, and place in a bright area, out of direct sun. In winter, bring it closer to a sunny window. Remove the flower stems after blooming. Repot every 2–3 years.

GERANIUM

Pelargonium species and hybrids

TEMPERATURE 7–25°C (45–77°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD up to 40 x 25cm (16 x 10in)

While geraniums are often grown in pots in the garden in summer, some varieties also make pretty house plants, and will flower for longer indoors. Look out for regal *Pelargoniums*, with their clusters of large blooms, and zonal *Pelargoniums*, which have dark ringed leaf marks. Scented-leaved geraniums with smaller blooms are also prized, and release a lemon, mint, or rose fragrance when the foliage is touched.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings from spring to summer, ensuring you do not wet the leaves or flowers. In winter, keep the compost almost dry.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks in spring, and then switch to a high potash fertilizer, such as tomato feed, in summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant geraniums in a 12.5–20cm (5–8in) pot in either multipurpose or soil-based compost with some added grit. Set in a light area, out of midday summer sun, with good ventilation. Cut back stems in early spring before growth resumes. Repot annually in fresh compost and a slightly larger pot.

FLORIST'S CINERARIA

Pericallis × hybrida Senetti Series

TEMPERATURE 5–21°C (41–70°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 40 x 25cm (14 x 10in)

Producing a blaze of colour with their bright magenta-pink, blue, violet, or bicoloured daisy-like flowers, florist's cineraria are hard to beat for spring to summer impact. The blooms appear above triangular, wavy-edged green foliage, and these cool-season annuals will also reflower later in the year if cut back in early summer.

WATERING Ensure the compost is moist but never wet, which may rot the roots.

FEEDING Feed monthly with a balanced liquid fertilizer from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant cineraria in a medium-sized 15cm (6in) pot in multipurpose compost, and set in a cool, bright room, away from radiators and heaters. After the flowers have faded, trim the stems back to 10–15cm (4–6in) above the compost to encourage a second flush later in the year. Buy new plants each year.

POMEGRANATE

Punica granatum

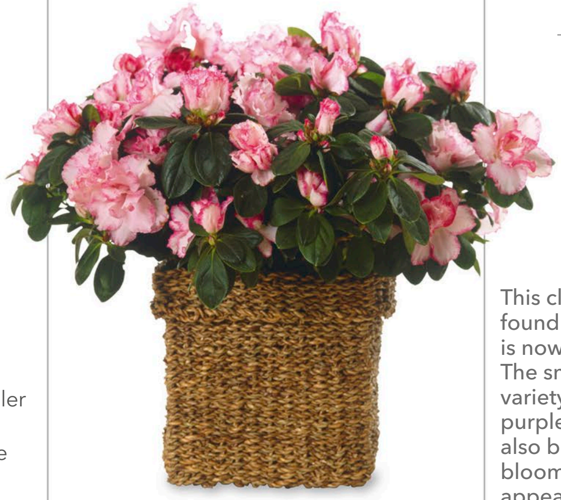
TEMPERATURE -5–25°C (23–77°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 2 x 2m (6 x 6ft)

Pomegranates can grow into large shrubs outside in mild areas, but their size will be restricted when grown in a pot indoors. They produce deciduous, oval-shaped green leaves, bronze when young, and funnel-shaped red flowers in late summer, followed by edible round fruits. The dwarf form, *P. granatum* var. *nana*, is a good choice for small spaces, but its fruits are not edible.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn; allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings through winter.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to summer, then switch to a high-potash fertilizer when the flower buds appear.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a large 20–30cm (8–12in) pot in a 3:1 mix of soil-based compost and grit. In spring, set in a sunny room, but move to a cooler spot in winter after it has lost its leaves. Fruits will only ripen if temperatures are at least 13–16°C (55–60°F). Prune in spring, and repot every 2–3 years.



INDIAN AZALEA

Rhododendron simsii

TEMPERATURE 10–24°C (50°–75°F)
LIGHT Light shade
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 45 x 45cm (18 x 18in)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

The perfect pick-me-up in spring, the Indian azalea's blend of glossy, dark green leaves and early blooms will liven up any cool room at this time of year. Its clusters of single or double flowers, sometimes with ruffled petals, come in shades of pink, red, white, or bicolours. The buds are beautiful too, and the blooms last for many weeks.

WATERING Water with rainwater or distilled water and keep the compost moist from early spring to autumn; reduce watering just slightly over winter but never let the plant dry out.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer designed for acid-loving plants once a month from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a 15–20cm (6–8in) pot, depending on the size of the azalea, in ericaceous compost. Set in light shade and a cool room when in flower. Stand the plant outside in shade or in a cool room in summer. Repot every 2–3 years in spring when root-bound.

AFRICAN VIOLET

Saintpaulia cultivars

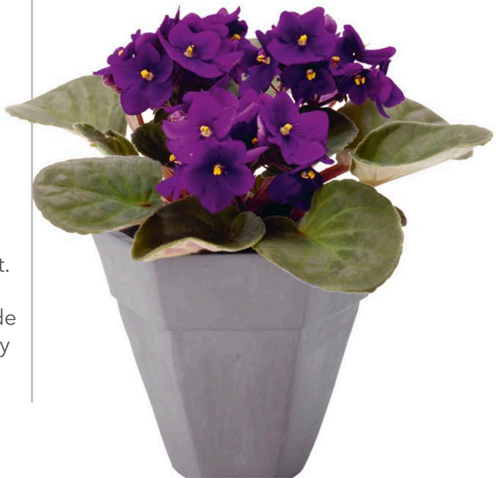
TEMPERATURE 16–24°C (61–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 7.5 x 20cm (4 x 8in)

This classic house plant used to be found in almost every home, and it is now enjoying a renewed popularity. The small round flowers come in a wide variety of colours, including pink, red, purple, and white, and the petals may also be ruffled or frilly. African violets bloom throughout the year, the flowers appearing above soft round dark green leaves, which can be maroon beneath.

WATERING Water from below by placing the pot in a shallow tray of water for about 20 minutes, then leaving it to drain; soggy compost can lead to root rot. Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings. Set on a tray of damp pebbles to increase humidity.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer once a month between spring and late summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a small 7.5–10cm (3–4in) pot in house plant compost (or a 2:1 mix of soil-based and multipurpose composts). Set in filtered light, out of draughts, but move to sunny windowsill in winter. Deadhead regularly. Repot only when tightly root-bound.



JERUSALEM CHERRY

Solanum pseudocapsicum

TEMPERATURE 10–21°C (50–70°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 45 x 60cm (18 x 24in)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

Unremarkable for much of the year, this plant explodes with colour in autumn and winter when its red tomato-like fruits emerge, adding a colourful natural feature to winter festive decorations. The dark green wavy-edged leaves and starry white summer flowers provide interest at other times. Do not eat the poisonous fruits.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from late spring to midwinter. After the fruits have faded, allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings.

FEEDING Feed with a balanced fertilizer once a month from late spring until the fruits appear. After fruiting, allow a few weeks without fertilizer.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow this plant in a 10–15cm (4–6in) pot, or larger, in an equal mix of soil-based and multipurpose composts. Set in bright spot from autumn to spring. Stand it outside after the frosts or place in a cool bright room in summer. When the fruits have shrivelled, cut the stems back by half to encourage bushy growth. Repot every 2–3 years in spring.

PEACE LILY

Spathiphyllum wallisii

TEMPERATURE 12–24°C (55–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 60cm (24 x 24in)
WARNING! All parts are poisonous

The peace lily makes an elegant house plant with its glossy dark green leaves and large white flowers. The blooms are composed of a spike of small flowers, known as a spadix, and a tear-shaped spathe (petal-like sheath). The long-lasting blooms appear in spring and fade gradually from white to green. This plant also helps to reduce air pollutants.

WATERING From spring to autumn, keep the compost moist; allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings in winter. Mist regularly or set on a tray of damp pebbles.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from early spring to late autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow a peace lily in a 15–20cm (6–8in) pot in an equal mix of multipurpose and soil-based compost. Stand in a bright spot or some shade, out of direct sun. Remove flower stems after blooming. Repot only when root-bound.

BIRD OF PARADISE

Strelitzia reginae AGM

TEMPERATURE 12–24°C (55–75°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Challenging
HEIGHT & SPREAD 90 x 60cm (3 x 2ft)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

Large, blue-grey, paddle-shaped leaves provide a foil for this plant's sculptural flowers. The exotic blooms, which look like an exotic bird, take several months to appear on fully mature plants that are at least three years old.

WATERING Keep the compost moist in spring and summer; reduce in autumn and winter, allowing the top to dry out between waterings. Mist daily, set on a tray or damp pebbles, or use a humidifier.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid feed every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a 20–30cm (8–12in) pot in an 3:1 mix of soil-based compost and grit. Set in full sun and provide good ventilation in summer. Replace the top compost layer annually; repot every 2 years in spring.

CAPE PRIMROSE

Streptocarpus hybrids

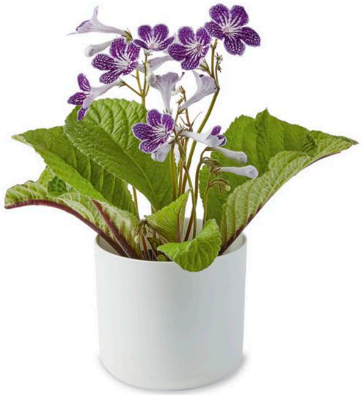
TEMPERATURE 12–24°C (55–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 60cm (24 x 24in)

These free-flowering plants come in a huge assortment of colours to suit any decor or display, from white, pink, and red, to blues and purples. Many are also bicoloured or have patterned petals. The blooms appear from spring to autumn on slim stems above a rosette of wrinkled, lance-shaped green leaves, although some types, such as Crystal varieties, flower in winter too. Cape primroses are quite easy to grow, and will decorate a windowsill or bright area of your home for many years.

WATERING Water either from above or below, by placing the pot in a tray of water for 20 minutes and then leaving the plant to drain. Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings from spring to autumn, and reduce so that the compost is almost dry in winter. Overwatering can cause root rot.

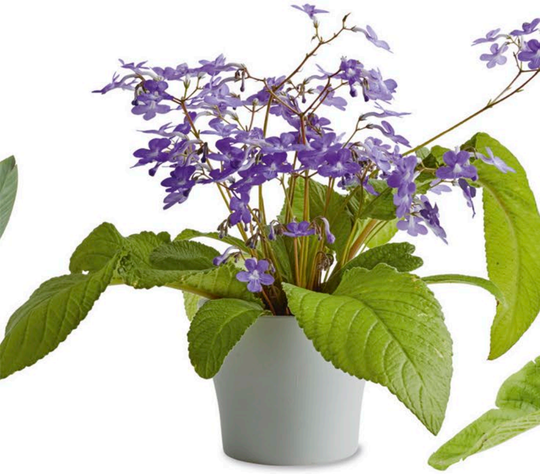
FEEDING Apply a high-potash fertilizer once a month from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a small 10–15cm (4–6in) pot in multipurpose or house plant compost. Set in a partly shaded spot, such as near a window which receives direct sun for half the day. During winter, move it to a windowsill in a window that receives direct sunlight for most of the day. Cut off flower stems as blooms begin to fade and remove old leaves in spring when fresh growth appears. Repot into a slightly larger container each spring, but keep the plant a little root-bound.



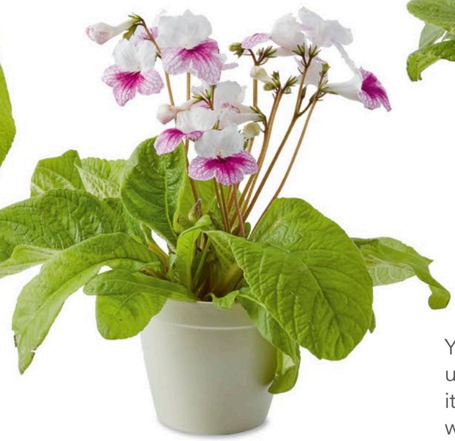
Streptocarpus 'Polka-Dot Purple' AGM

One of the more unusual varieties, 'Polka-Dot Purple' sports white blooms, decorated with a fine purple lacy pattern that makes them looks spotty from a distance.



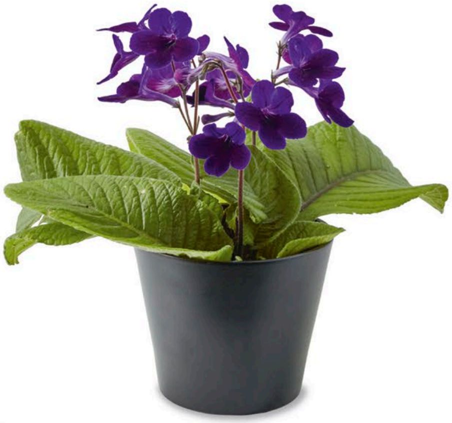
Streptocarpus 'Falling Stars' AGM

This award-winning pale blue Cape primrose produces an abundance of small blooms from early spring, and continues to flower until autumn.



Streptocarpus 'Pink Leyla' AGM

The blooms of 'Pink Leyla' warrant close inspection to appreciate the clear white upper petals with delicate rose-pink brush strokes on the lower lips.



Streptocarpus 'Targa'

You may also find this Cape primrose under the name 'Stella', but either way, it is an excellent variety, producing a wealth of velvety-looking flowers with a slight sheen in two rich tones of purple.

FERNS

With their graceful, arching stems of finely divided or wavy-edged leaves, known as fronds, ferns make beautiful house plants for shady areas. Try using one as an elegant focal point on a table or stand, or group a few together to create a lush woodland effect. Ferns do not bear flowers or seeds, instead reproducing via spores held in small brown cases ("sporangia") on the undersides of the fronds.

DELTA MAIDENHAIR FERN

Adiantum raddianum AGM

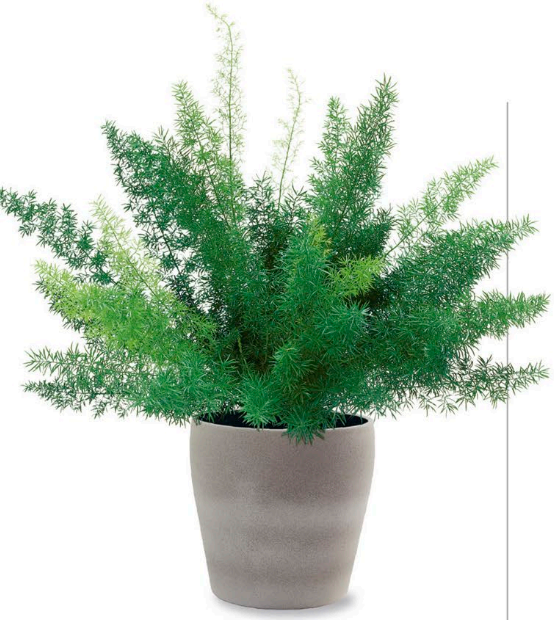
TEMPERATURE 10–24°C (50–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate to high
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 50 x 80cm (20 x 32in)

This elegant fern's dark stems and small round leaves produce an airy, tree-like shape, and it makes a stand-out centrepiece on a table or plant stand. It is a good candidate for a terrarium, too, as it thrives in humid conditions.

WATERING Keep the compost moist, not wet, at all times, and set on a tray of damp pebbles or mist the foliage daily.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer monthly from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant this fern in a 15–20cm (6–8in) container in multipurpose compost. Stand in light shade, out of direct sun and draughts; a humid bathroom or kitchen would make a good home. Repot every 2 years in spring. If the plant starts to look tatty, cut off all the stems at the base in spring; it will soon regenerate healthy growth.



FOXTAIL FERN

Asparagus densiflorus

TEMPERATURE 13–24°C (55–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Low to moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 60cm (2 x 2ft)

Despite its delicate appearance, the foxtail fern is very easy to grow, and makes a handsome specimen in a hanging basket or tall pot where its feathery fronds will cascade over the sides. Although not a true fern, its finely divided foliage and general appearance means it is usually sold as one.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn; reduce in winter, allowing the top to dry out between waterings. It is tolerant of drier air than true ferns, but misting the foliage occasionally keeps it healthy.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a small to medium-sized 10–15cm (4–6in) pot in soil-based compost, and set in bright filtered sun or light shade. Remove brown or overly long stems in spring, and, if root-bound, repot into a container one size larger.

BIRD'S NEST FERN

Asplenium nidus AGM

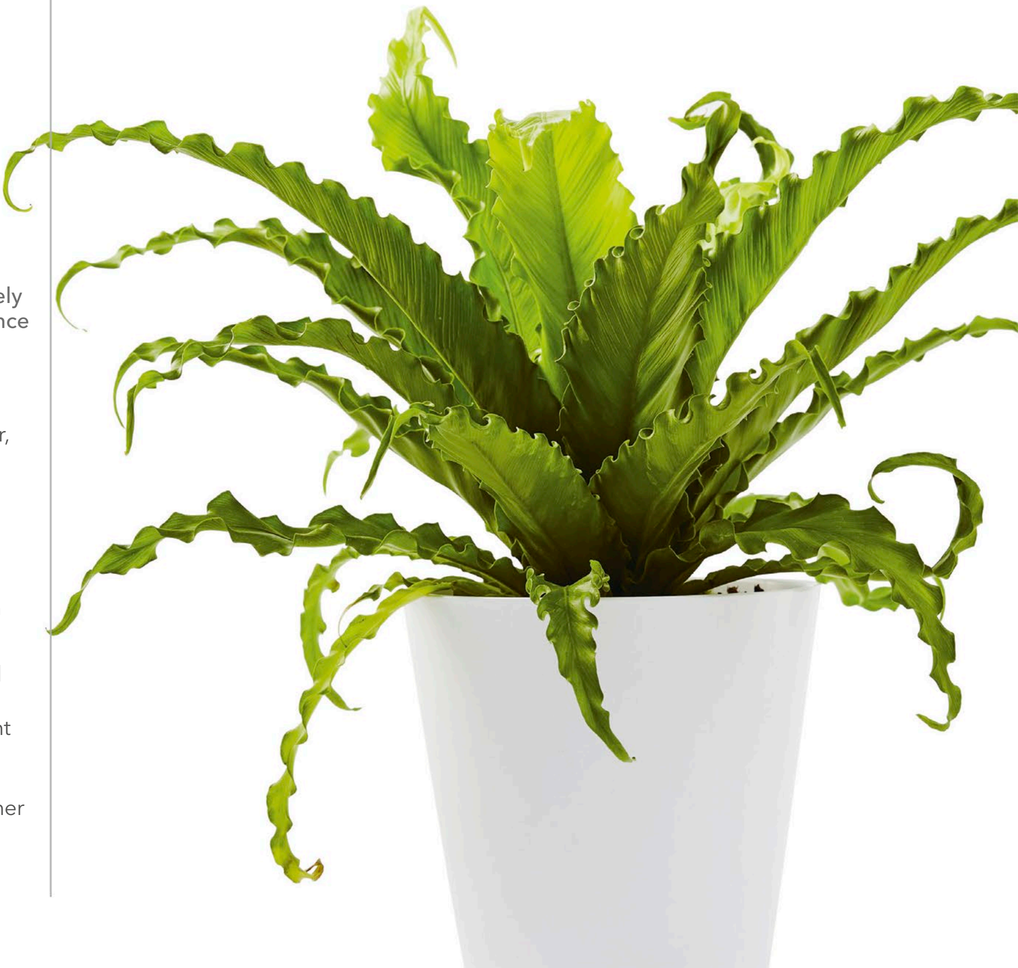
TEMPERATURE 13–24°C (55–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate to high
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 60 x 40cm (24 x 16in)

Unlike many ferns, this one has wide strap-shaped, undivided, fronds. The handsome bright green foliage forms a compact vase shape, and some types, such as 'Crispy Wave', have crinkled, wavy-edged leaves that look like the ruffles on a flamenco skirt.

WATERING Keep the compost moist at all times, ensuring water does not drip into the frond rosette, which can lead to rotting. Mist with rainwater or distilled water every day or two, or set on a tray of damp pebbles.

FEEDING From spring to early autumn, apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in an equal mix of charcoal, loam-based compost, and multipurpose compost, in a 15–20cm (6–8in) pot. Set in a draught-free area, out of direct sunlight; a bathroom would be a good spot. Repot young plants every 2 years in spring.



RABBIT'S FOOT FERN

Humata tyermanii

TEMPERATURE 13–24°C (55–75°F)
LIGHT Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate to high
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 30 x 50cm (12 x 20in)

Also known as the spider fern, its long, furry rhizomes (root-like structures) make an eye-catching feature when they trail over the sides of a pot. You can also show them off in kokedama displays (see pp76–79). The rich green lacy foliage adds to this plant's charms.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn; allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings in winter. Mist regularly or place on a tray of damp pebbles.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to early autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in an equal mix of multipurpose and ericaceous composts in a 15–20cm (6–8in) pot or a hanging basket. Do not bury the furry rhizomes. Place in an area of high humidity, such as a bathroom, in light shade and a cool spot in summer. Repot in spring if the plant becomes root-bound.

CROCODILE FERN

Microsorum musifolium 'Crocodyllus'

TEMPERATURE 13–24°C (55–75°F)
LIGHT Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD
60 x 60cm (24 x 24in)

Display this remarkable-looking fern where its distinctive crocodile-skin leaf patterns can be admired up close – a hanging basket at eye-level would be ideal. This architectural plant demands high humidity and will thrive in a kitchen or bathroom where there is space for its wide-spreading fronds.

WATERING Water from spring to early autumn when the top of the compost is almost dry; in winter, allow the top to dry out between waterings. Set on a tray of damp pebbles, and mist the leaves every few days in spring and summer.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to early autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE In a 15–20cm (6–8in) pot, plant this fern in an equal mix of soil-based and multipurpose composts. Place out of direct sunlight in a lightly shaded spot; it may need to be moved closer to a window in winter. Repot every 2 years or when root-bound.

BOSTON FERN

Nephrolepis exaltata AGM

TEMPERATURE 12–24°C (54–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 60cm (24 x 24in)

This popular plant, also known as the sword fern, is loved for its fountain of arching, finely divided, green fronds, which look spectacular flowing from a pot on a stand or a hanging basket. Relatively easy to care for, just maintain a humid atmosphere to prevent the leaves from turning brown.

WATERING From spring to autumn, keep the compost moist but not wet (fronds can rot in soggy compost); allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings in winter. Mist regularly or place on a tray of damp pebbles.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to early autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a 12.5–15cm (5–6in) pot in a 50:50 mix of multipurpose and soil-based composts, and place out of direct sunlight in filtered light or part shade. A bathroom with good ventilation is an ideal home. Repot into a container one size larger every 2–3 years if the plant becomes root-bound.

BUTTON FERN

Pellaea rotundifolia AGM

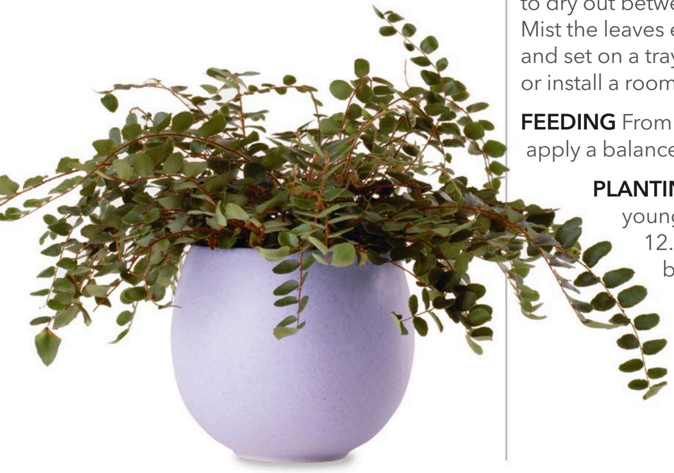
TEMPERATURE 5–24°C (41–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 30 x 30cm (12 x 12in)

The arching fronds of this graceful fern are composed of tiny button-shaped leaves that add a light, airy note to a display of foliage plants. It also makes an elegant subject for a small hanging basket, and can be used as edging for a large pot of taller shade-loving plants. Despite its delicate appearance, the button fern is easier to care for than many of its cousins, tolerating drier compost and lower humidity levels.

WATERING From spring to autumn, water when the top of the compost feels almost dry; reduce watering slightly in winter. Set on a tray of damp pebbles or mist the foliage every few days.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid feed once a month year-round.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a 15cm (6in) pot, or one that fits the root ball, and plant in ericaceous compost with a handful of perlite for added drainage. Place your fern in filtered light or a slightly shaded area, out of direct sun – it will not suffer in draughts and is tolerant of low winter temperatures (not freezing). Repot in fresh compost every year or two, or when it becomes root-bound.



STAGHORN FERN

Platycerium bifurcatum AGM

TEMPERATURE 10–24°C (50–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY High
CARE Challenging
HEIGHT & SPREAD 30 x 90cm (12 x 36in)

Impossible to overlook, the spectacular antler-shaped fronds of the staghorn fern make this demanding plant a popular choice. It actually produces two types of fronds: those at the base are round, flat, and green, and turn brown with age, so do not worry if this happens; the large, antler-shaped fronds grow from these smaller leaves.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to early autumn – set the pot in a tray of water for about 15 minutes if the round leaves have covered the compost, as soaking these can cause them to rot. Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings in winter. Mist the leaves every day in the morning, and set on a tray of damp pebbles, or install a room humidifier.

FEEDING From spring to early autumn, apply a balanced liquid fertilizer monthly.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant young ferns in a medium-sized 12.5–15cm (5-6in) pot or basket of orchid compost, and keep the plant out of direct sunlight in a humid atmosphere, such as a bathroom. Repot every 2–3 years in spring.

CRETAN BRAKE FERN

Pteris cretica AGM

TEMPERATURE 13–75°C (55–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 60cm (2 x 2ft)

This much-loved, dainty fern is best displayed on its own, where the wiry stems topped with slim, finger-like fronds, have space to expand. Choose between the plain green fronds of the species and variegated forms that features a white stripe through the centre of each leaflet.

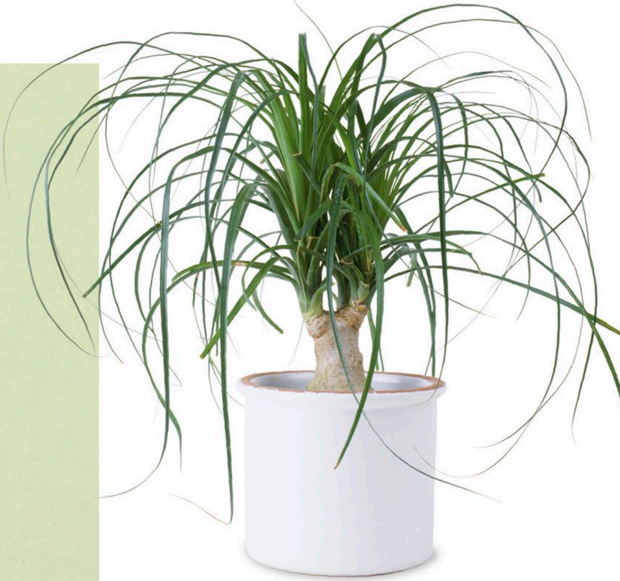
WATERING Ensure the compost is moist, but not wet, from spring to autumn; in winter, allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings. Mist the foliage every day or two.

FEEDING Apply a half strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to early autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant this fern in a 12.5–15cm (5–6in) pot in a 2:1:1 mix of soil-based compost, multipurpose compost, and charcoal. Set out of direct sunlight in a shady spot and a humid atmosphere, such as a bathroom. Cut back brown or tatty fronds at the base and repot every 2 years in spring.

PALMS

Transform your home into a tropical paradise with an elegant palm or palm-like plant, or include a few in a conservatory or bright room to evoke a parlour of the *Belle Époque* era when palms were first popular. Many of these tall, leafy plants are easy to grow, but check before buying if you are a beginner, as some are quite demanding. They are long-lived, and will provide many years of beauty, if given the right care.



PONY TAIL PALM

Beaucarnea recurvata AGM

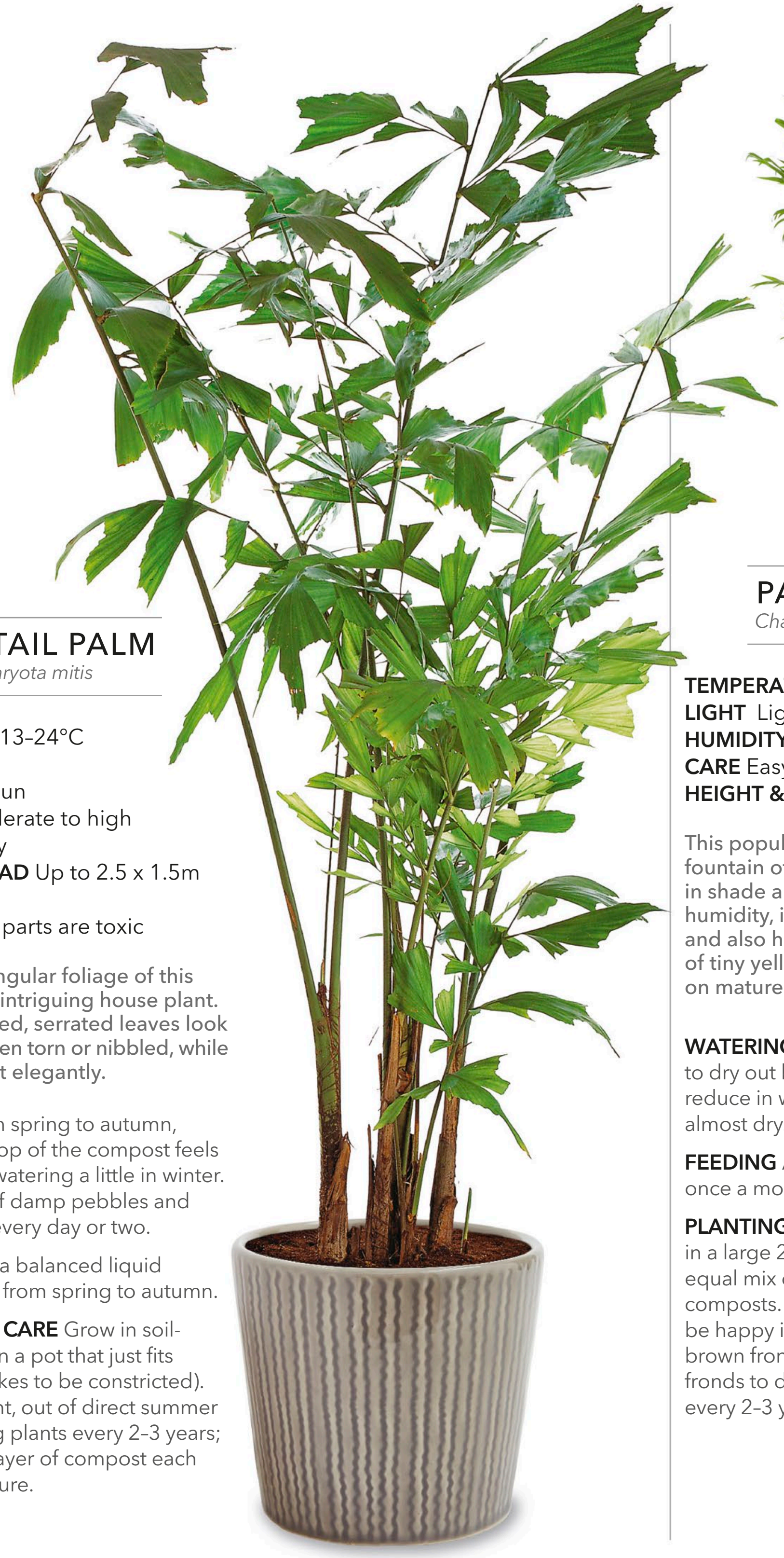
TEMPERATURE 5–26°C (41–79°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD up to 2 x 1m (6 x 3ft)

Native to Mexico, the ponytail palm's fountain of hair-like leaves and textured, distinctive trunk, with its large swollen base, make it a star attraction in any house plant display. Although not officially a palm (it is a relative of the yucca), its similar features mean that it is often grouped with them.

WATERING In summer, water once a week, allowing the top of the compost to dry out between waterings; its bulbous stem stores water and will keep it alive if you forget occasionally. In winter the compost should be almost dry.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month in spring and summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow your plant in a large 25–30cm (10–12in) pot in a 3:1 mix of soil-based compost and sharp sand. Set in bright light. Replenish the top layer of compost every spring, and repot this slow-growing plant every 2–3 years in a container just one size larger.



FISHTAIL PALM

Caryota mitis

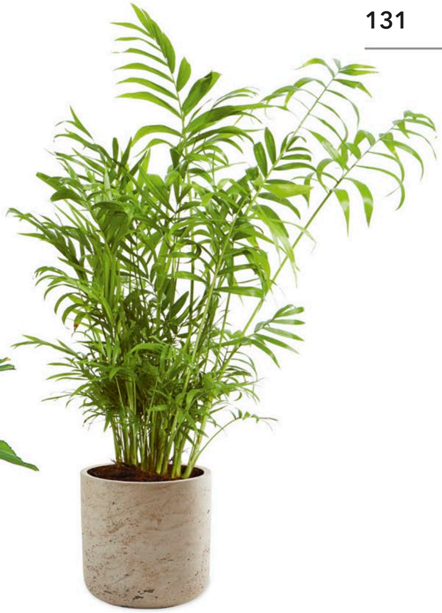
TEMPERATURE 13–24°C (55–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate to high
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 2.5 x 1.5m (8 x 5ft)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

The unusual triangular foliage of this palm make it an intriguing house plant. The fishtail-shaped, serrated leaves look like they have been torn or nibbled, while the stems fan out elegantly.

WATERING From spring to autumn, water when the top of the compost feels just dry; reduce watering a little in winter. Stand on a tray of damp pebbles and mist the foliage every day or two.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer monthly from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in soil-based compost in a pot that just fits the root ball (it likes to be constricted). Set in filtered light, out of direct summer sun. Repot young plants every 2–3 years; replace the top layer of compost each spring when mature.



PARLOUR PALM

Chamaedorea elegans AGM

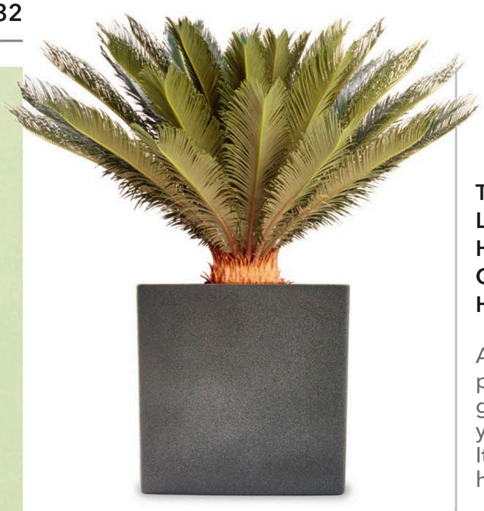
TEMPERATURE 10–27°C (50–80°F)
LIGHT Light shade
HUMIDITY Low to moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 1.2 x 0.6m (4 x 2ft)

This popular palm produces an elegant fountain of lush, feathery foliage. Happy in shade and tolerant of low levels of humidity, it is a very easy plant to grow and also helps to purify the air. Clusters of tiny yellow flowers sometimes appear on mature plants.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings in summer; reduce in winter so that the compost is almost dry. Mist the leaves regularly.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid feed once a month from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow your palm in a large 20–30cm (8–12in) pot in an equal mix of soil-based and multipurpose composts. Set in light shade; it will not be happy in deep shade. Cut out any brown fronds at the base; it is normal for fronds to die off from time to time. Repot every 2–3 years when root-bound.



SAGO PALM

Cycas revoluta AGM

TEMPERATURE 13–24°C (55–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 60cm (24 x 24in)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

Although not a true palm, this chunky plant's textured trunk, topped with arching fronds, certainly looks like one. While it is, in fact, a cycad (an ancient group of slow-growing plants), it would not look out of place on a tropical beach. Beware the sharp, needle-like leaves when positioning it.

WATERING From spring to autumn, allow the top of the compost to dry out a little before watering. In winter, the compost should be almost dry. Overwatering, or watering the crown (where the leaves emerge), can cause rot. Mist the leaves in summer.

FEEDING Feed with a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a 20–30cm (8–12in) pot in an equal mix of soil-based and multipurpose composts. Set it in good light, out of direct summer sun, and away from radiators in winter. It is a slow-growing plant, and will need repotting every 3 years or when root-bound.

ARECA PALM

Dypsis lutescens AGM

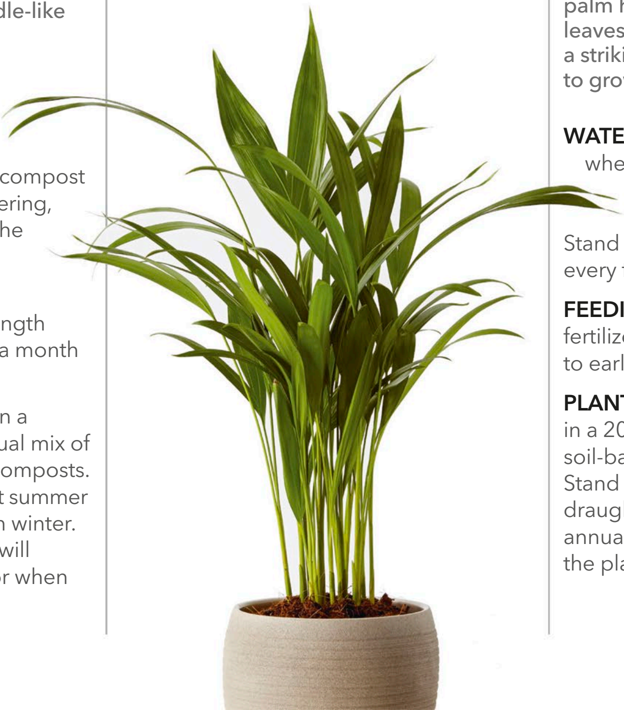
TEMPERATURE 13–24°C (55–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 2 x 1m (6 x 3ft)

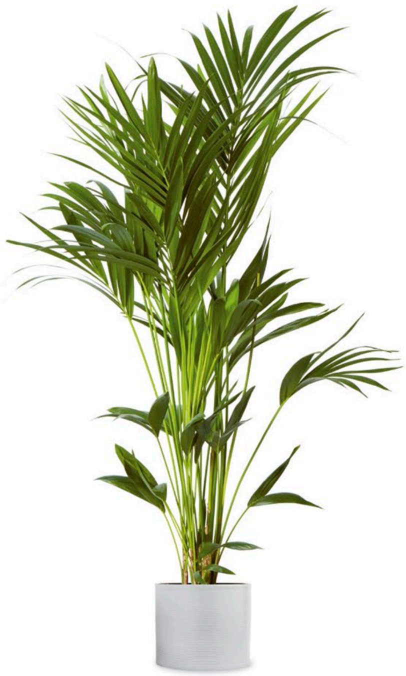
Also known as the butterfly palm, this popular house plant has arching, wide, glossy green fronds. Sprays of small yellow flowers may appear in summer. It is easy to grow, and one of the best house plants for removing air pollutants.

WATERING From spring to early autumn, allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings; reduce watering in winter so the compost is almost dry. Mist every day or two, or stand on a tray of damp pebbles.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer 2–3 times during the growing season from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a 20–30cm (8–12in) pot in soil-based compost. Set in filtered light, and away from heaters in winter. Remove dead fronds at the base, and repot every 3 years in spring if root-bound.





KENTIA PALM

Howea forsteriana AGM

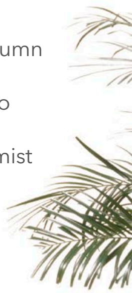
TEMPERATURE 13–24°C (55–75°F)
LIGHT Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 3 x 2m (8 x 5ft)

Perfect for a shady room, the kentia palm has tall stems of dark green, glossy leaves that fan out elegantly to create a striking feature plant. Relatively easy to grow, it is a good choice for beginners.

WATERING Water from spring to autumn when the top of the compost feels slightly dry; in winter reduce so that the compost is just moist. Stand on a tray of damp pebbles or mist every few days.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to early autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant this palm in a 20–30cm (8–12in) pot in 3:1 mix of soil-based compost and sharp sand. Stand in light shade and away from draughts. Replace the top of the compost annually in spring, but repot only when the plant is tightly root-bound.



MINIATURE DATE PALM

Phoenix roebelenii AGM

TEMPERATURE 10–24°C (50–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 1.8 x 1.5m (6 x 5ft)

Like one of the classic palms along the Côte d'Azur, this plant's textured stem and fine, feathery fronds have a stylish elegance. Almost as wide as it is tall, it needs plenty of space to show off its sculptural silhouette. Mature plants bear cream summer flowers and edible fruits.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn; in winter, allow the top to dry out between waterings. Stand on a tray of damp pebbles, and mist the leaves regularly in warm weather.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer monthly from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a pot that just fits the root ball, in soil-based compost. Stand in filtered light or a little shade, away from draughts. If possible, move to a cooler room in winter. Replace the top of the compost each spring; repot every 2–3 years when root-bound.

BAMBOO PALM

Rhapis excelsa AGM

TEMPERATURE 10–25°C (50–77°F)
LIGHT Light shade/Shade
HUMIDITY Low to moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 2 x 2m (6 x 6ft)

If you are looking for a palm with a difference, try this unusual plant. Its bamboo-like stems and large fronds, composed of blunt-ended, ribbed leaves, catch the eye when displayed in a large room or hallway. Slow-growing and tolerant of low light conditions, it is one of the easiest palms to grow, making it ideal for a beginner. The smaller *Rhapis humilis* is another good choice.

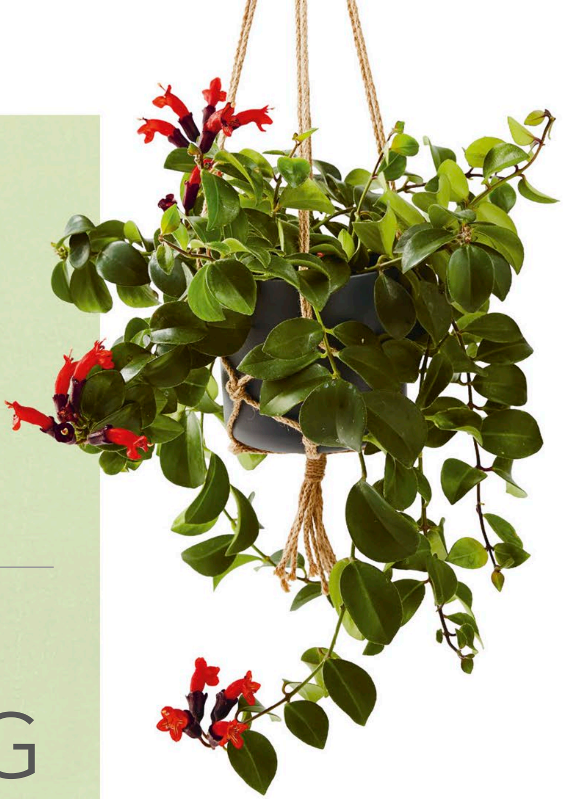
WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn, but avoid waterlogging. Reduce in winter so that the top of the compost feels dry between waterings. Mist the leaves every few days in summer.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer 2–3 times during the growing season from spring to autumn, or use a slow-release fertilizer once in early spring.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in pot that just fits the root ball in a 3:1 mix of multipurpose compost and perlite. Stand in light shade; it will tolerate deeper shade in summer but may need moving closer to the window in winter. Trim off old, brown fronds close to the trunk when they appear. Repot every 2–3 years, but only when root-bound.

TRAILING AND CLIMBING PLANTS

Cover your walls with flowers and foliage and inject colour into the space above your head with these climbing and trailing plants. Some climbers can be grown up a mossy pole to keep them compact, or you can attach their twining stems to wires and trellises fixed to your walls. Easy to grow in hanging baskets or cascading from shelves, trailers are the perfect option when floor space is tight.



LIPSTICK PLANT

Aeschynanthus pulcher AGM

TEMPERATURE 18–27°C (65–80°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 20 x 70cm (8 x 28in)

Cascading stems of fleshy green leaves create a lush foliage effect all year round, but the show really starts in summer when this trailer's spectacular red tubular flowers open, emerging from darker cases (sepals) like bright lipsticks.

WATERING From spring to autumn, apply tepid rainwater or distilled water when the top of the compost feels dry. Keep it a little drier in winter. Mist every day or two.

FEEDING Use a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month in spring and summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a pot that just fits the root ball, in a 4:1:1 mix of soil-based compost, sand, and perlite. Hang in bright filtered light, out of direct sun, and keep warm year-round. Repot plants in spring when tightly root-bound.

PAPER FLOWER

Bougainvillea × buttiana

TEMPERATURE 10–26°C (50–79°F)
LIGHT Sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 1.5 x 1.5m (5 x 5ft)
WARNING! All parts are toxic to pets

This climber will cover a wall in a sunny room with twining stems of small green leaves and bright flowers, or you can train it up canes or a hoop to keep it compact. The papery blooms comprise red, pink, or white bracts (petal-like modified leaves) and tiny cream flowers.

WATERING From spring to early autumn, keep the compost moist; reduce watering in winter so the compost is just moist.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to late summer, replacing it with a high-potash feed at every third application.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a pot that fits the root ball in soil-based compost. Stand in full sun, and tie the stems to canes, a hoop, or wires fixed to a wall. Prune sideshoots in autumn. Repot young plants every 2 years; refresh the top layer of compost each spring when mature.

STRING OF HEARTS

Ceropegia linearis subsp. *woodii*

TEMPERATURE 8–24°C (46–75°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 5 x 90cm (2 x 36in)

The thread-like stems of this plant's tiny heart-shaped leaves tumble over the sides of its pot, just as its name describes. Display it high enough for the plant's long stems to trail down to where you can admire the patterned leaves, which are grey-green with purple undersides. The small pink and purple tubular summer flowers are followed by long, needle-like seedpods.

WATERING Water only when the top of the compost feels dry; in winter reduce watering so the compost is almost dry.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks in summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in cactus compost in a 10–20cm (4–8in) pot. Hang your plant in a basket or set on a shelf in bright light; it may lose its coloration if the light levels are too low. Repot only when root-bound.

SPIDER PLANT

Chlorophytum comosum

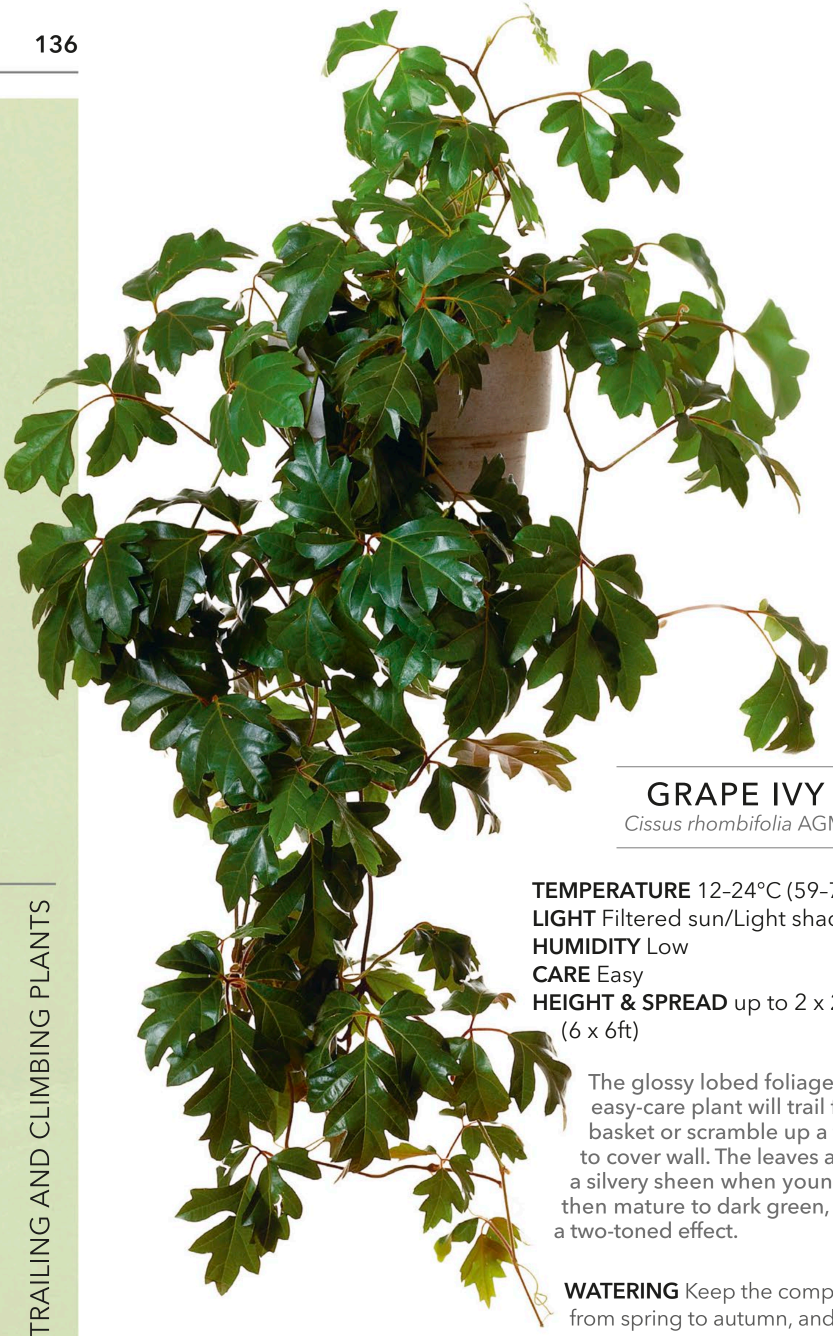
TEMPERATURE 7–25°C (45–76°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 12 x 60cm (1x 2ft)

Do not dismiss the spider plant just because it is widely available and easy to grow. It makes an eye-catching feature in a pot on a stand or in a hanging basket, its arching green and yellow leaves flowing gracefully over the sides, while baby plantlets dangle from long stems like spiders on silken threads.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn, and allow the top to dry out between waterings in winter.

FEEDING From mid-spring to early autumn, apply a balanced liquid feed every 2–3 weeks.

PLANTING AND REPOTTING Plant in a 50:50 mix of multipurpose and soil-based composts in a pot that will accommodate the root ball. Set in filtered light or a little shade, out of direct sun. It will tolerate gloomier areas but may not produce plantlets. Repot every 2–3 years in spring when the plant is root-bound.



GRAPE IVY

Cissus rhombifolia AGM

TEMPERATURE 12–24°C (59–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD up to 2 x 2m (6 x 6ft)

The glossy lobed foliage of this easy-care plant will trail from a basket or scramble up a trellis to cover wall. The leaves are have a silvery sheen when young, and then mature to dark green, giving a two-toned effect.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn, and reduce in winter so it is just moist.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer monthly from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in soil-based compost in a 15–20cm (6–8in) pot. If you grow it as a climber, tie the shoots in regularly to their supports. Trim back long growth in spring, and repot every 2–3 years or when root-bound, or replace the top layer of compost of mature plants each spring.

DEVIL'S IVY

Epipremnum aureum AGM

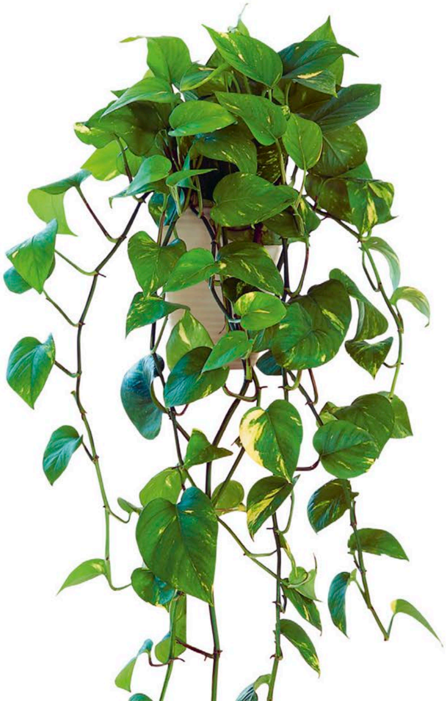
TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (59–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade/Shade
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD up to 2 x 2m (6 x 6ft)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

One of the best house plants for beginners, the almost indestructible devil's ivy produces trailing or climbing stems of large heart-shaped leaves that create a lush tropical effect. Display it in a hanging basket or set the pot on a tall plant stand anywhere in your home, apart from areas in full sun.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings from spring to autumn; in winter keep just moist.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer monthly from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in soil-based compost in a pot that fits the root ball. Set in bright or low light, out of direct sun. If grown as a climber, tie stems to a moss pole, trellis, or wires. Prune in spring. Repot every 2 years; replace the top layer of compost of mature plants each spring.



CREEPING FIG

Ficus pumila 'Snowflake'

TEMPERATURE 13–24°C (55–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 90 x 90cm (3 x3ft)
WARNING! All parts are toxic to pets

Use this dainty little trailing plant to dress up a hanging basket or flow over the sides of a pot of flowering or larger foliage plants. It can also be persuaded to climb a trellis, creating a textured screen of small, round, cream-edged leaves. While fairly easy to grow, if the plant is not watered regularly and left to drain, the foliage can soon dry out.

WATERING Keep the compost moist at all times, but a little drier in winter. Mist every day or two in hot summer weather.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer monthly in spring and summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a 10–20cm (4–8in) pot in soil-based compost. Set in filtered sun or light shade. Pinch out the stem tips to produce bushy growth. If plants start to look leggy, cut them back hard to promote new leafy growth. Repot every 2 years in spring.

HOYA

Hoya species

TEMPERATURE 16–24°C (61–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 4 x 4m (13 x 13ft)
WARNING! The milky sap is toxic

The waxy white flowers of this beautiful climber release a sweet fragrance when they open in summer. To cover a wall with long leafy stems, choose *Hoya carnosa* AGM, or, if you have a small space to fill, opt for the more compact *Hoya lanceolata* subsp. *bella* AGM (above).

WATERING From spring to autumn, keep the compost moist; water when the top of the compost is dry in winter. Set on a tray of damp pebbles, or mist regularly, but not when in bud or flower.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength high-potash fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a pot that easily fits the root ball, in an equal mix of orchid compost, multipurpose compost, and perlite. Prune lightly in autumn, but do not remove the flower stalks, as more blooms will grow from these stumps. Repot in spring when root-bound.

JASMINE

Jasminum polyanthum AGM

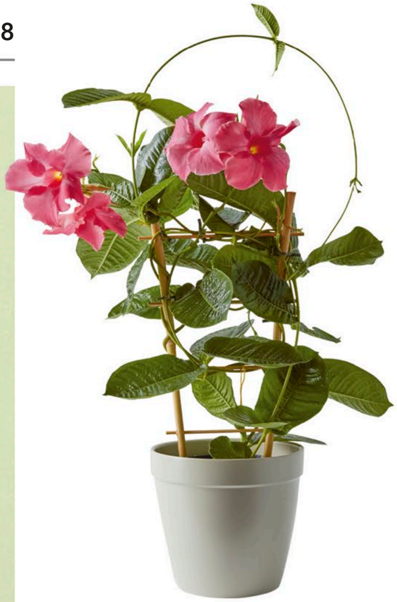
TEMPERATURE 10–24°C (50–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 3 x 3m (10 x 10ft)

When it flowers in midwinter, this climber's sweet scent will fill a cool room, such as a hallway, with fragrance. The blooms are pink in bud, and appear over many weeks between the dark green leaves. This is a large plant, and while you can train it up canes when young, it soon becomes a tangle of stems if not given space to expand on wires or a trellis.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to late summer; reduce watering a little in winter, but ensure the compost is moist when in bud and flower.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a pot that just fits the root ball in soil-based compost, mixed with a few handfuls of perlite. Keep cool, as jasmine will suffer in warm, centrally heated rooms. Prune after flowering – you can be quite brutal to keep it compact. Only repot young plants; for mature plants, just replace the top layer of compost each spring.



MANDEVILLA

Mandevilla × amoena 'Alice du Pont' AGM

TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (59–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Challenging
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 7 x 7m (23 x 23ft)

It is easy to be tempted by the large, pink, tropical flowers of this twining climber, but remember that it needs a large space to thrive, and may sulk in the average living room. However, it makes an outstanding feature on a wall in a conservatory or room with a skylight.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn; reduce in winter so the compost is just moist. Mist the foliage every day in summer.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer once a month in spring and switch to a high-potash feed in summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a large 25–30cm (10–12in) pot in a 3:1 mix of soil-based compost and grit. Stand in bright light, out of direct summer sun. Prune in spring to create a framework of 3–5 strong shoots; if there is only one shoot, reduce it by a third to prompt more to form. Replace the top layer of compost annually in spring, rather than repotting.

SWISS CHEESE PLANT

Monstera deliciosa AGM

TEMPERATURE 18-27°C (65-80°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 8 x 2.5m (26 x 8ft)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

This classic climbing plant first became popular in the 1970s. Admired for its glossy, heart-shaped, lobed and perforated leaves, which give rise to its name, this easy-care plant is often sold with the stems tied to a mossy pole.

WATERING Water when the top of the compost feels dry; reduce watering slightly in winter. Mist every few days or set on a tray of damp pebbles.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every month from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a 20–30cm (8–12in) pot in 3:1 mix of soil-based compost and sand. Set in filtered sun or light shade; shaded foliage will not produce holes. Prune in spring, and wipe the leaves regularly to remove dust. Repot every 2–3 years, or replace the top layer of compost annually in spring.

RED PASSION FLOWER

Passiflora racemosa AGM

TEMPERATURE 12–24°C (54–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Challenging
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 3 x 1m (10 x 3ft)

The most widely available passion flower is the blue form (*Passiflora caerulea*), which is hardy and easier to grow outside in mild regions, while this more unusual red type is tender. Its showy, bowl-shaped, summer flowers lend a tropical note to a conservatory or bright room with a skylight. It also produces pale green edible fruits.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn. In winter, water only when the top of the compost feels dry. Mist plants every day in summer or set on tray of damp pebbles.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from mid-spring to late summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a 20–30cm (8–12in) pot in soil-based compost. Stand in bright filtered sun, and prune in early spring. Repot young plants in spring; when mature, just replace the top layer of compost annually.

HEART-LEAF

Philodendron scandens AGM

TEMPERATURE 16-24°C (60-75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Low to moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 1.5 x 1.5m (5 x 5ft)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

This impressive climber will cover a wall with its large, heart-shaped leaves, which can grow up to 20cm (10in) in length, transforming a living room into a lush jungle in no time. It is easy to care for, grows well in low light, and can be trained up a mossy pole to keep it compact in a small space.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn; reduce in winter, watering only when the top of the compost feels dry. Mist the leaves every few days in spring and summer.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to early autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a large 20–30cm (8–12in) pot in a 2:1 mix of soil-based compost and sand or perlite. Young plants can be grown in a hanging basket, with the stems trailing down. As they grow larger, attach the stems to a mossy pole, trellis, or horizontal wires fixed to a wall. Stand in filtered sun or light shade; it tolerates darker shade but may not grow as vigorously. Wipe leaves regularly to remove dust. Prune in late winter and repot in spring, or replace the top layer of compost annually.

CAPE IVY

Senecio macroglossus 'Variegatus' AGM

TEMPERATURE 10–25°C (50–77°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun in summer
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 1.5 x 1.5m (5 x 5ft)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

Masquerading as a regular ivy, this beautiful house plant has a little more class, with its glossy, fleshy, green and yellow leaves and dark twining stems. Use it to trail from a basket or grow it on a hoop or up a tripod or trellis.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings from spring to late summer; reduce watering in autumn and winter so it is just moist.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant Cape ivy in a 15cm (6in) pot in cactus compost or a 3:1 mix of soil-based compost and sharp sand. Stand in direct sun, moving to bright filtered light in midsummer. Trim the shoot tips in spring if they get too long, and tie the stems to their support regularly. Repot every 2–3 years or when the plant becomes root-bound.

STRING OF PEARLS

Senecio rowleyanus

TEMPERATURE 10–25°C (50–77°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun in summer
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 5 x 90cm (2 x 36in)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

The slender stems of little pea-like leaves flow from this trailing plant's pot like strings of green pearls, making an intriguing feature. It is a good choice for beginners, since the fleshy "beads" retain moisture and will sail through periods of neglect. Small white tubular flowers may also appear in spring.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings from spring to autumn; in winter, keep just moist so the beads do not shrivel up.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in either cactus compost or a 3:1 mix of soil-based compost and sharp sand, in a 10–15cm (4–6in) pot. Set in filtered light in summer, and a cooler but bright spot in winter. Trim in spring and repot every 2–3 years.

MIND-YOUR-OWN-BUSINESS

Soleirolia soleirolii

TEMPERATURE -5–24°C (23–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 5 x 90cm (2 x 36in)

Also known as baby's tears, this pretty plant forms a mound of tiny leaves on wiry stems, which look like a mop of curly hair trailing daintily from its pot. It suits contemporary displays, flowing from the top of three identical tall pots. Take care when planting it up with partners; it is fast-growing and can take over if not trimmed regularly. Tiny pink-white flowers appear in summer.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn, and slightly drier in winter. If left to dry out, the leaves will shrivel and die. Mist every few days.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every month from spring to autumn.

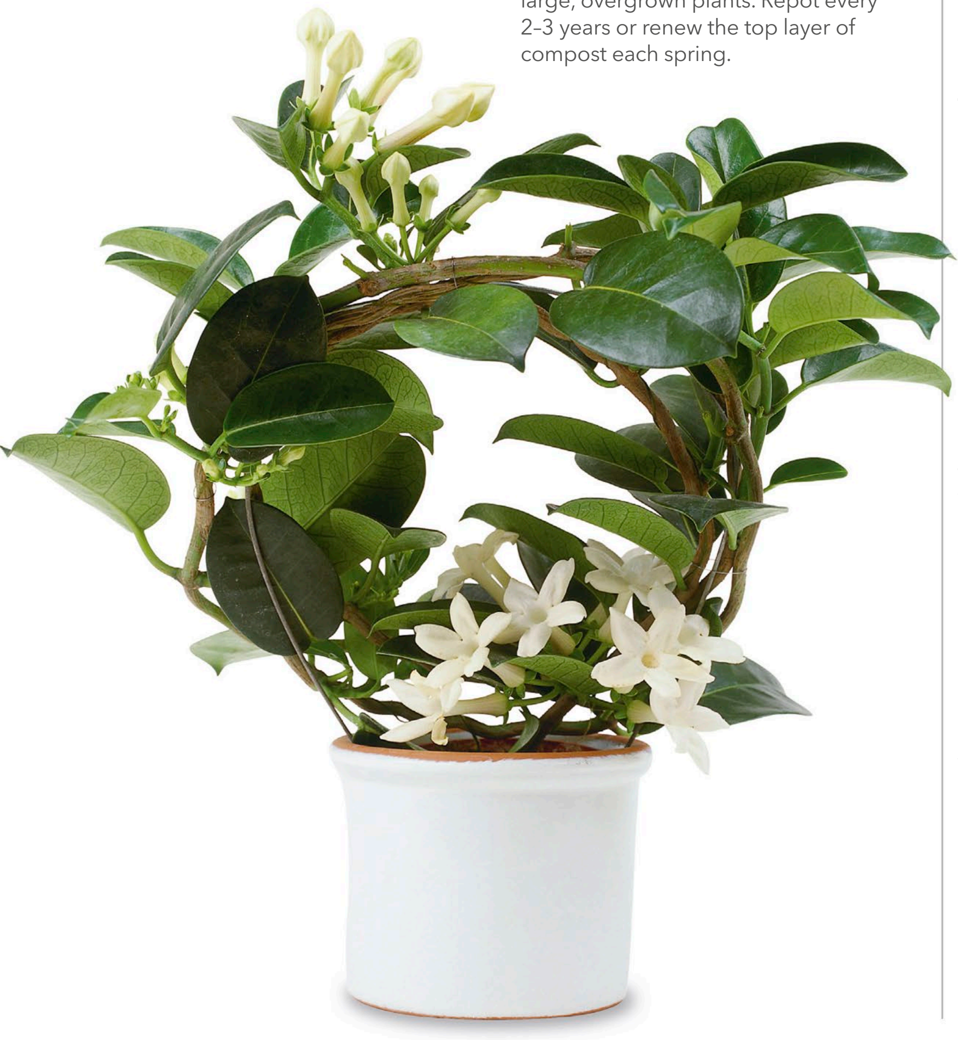
PLANTING AND CARE Plant this trailer in a 10–20cm (4–8in) pot in a 3:1 mix of soil-based compost and grit. Display in filtered sun or light shade, out of direct sun. Trim the stem tips to maintain bushy growth. Repot every 1–2 years.

STEPHANOTIS

Stephanotis floribunda AGM

TEMPERATURE 10–23°C (50–73°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 3 x 3m (10 x 10ft)

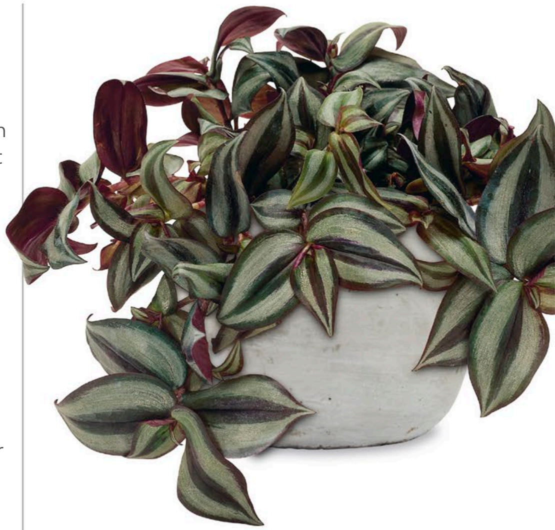
This climber's long, twining stems of glossy green leaves and fragrant, long-lasting waxy white flowers combine to create a spectacular visual and sensory effect in summer. Given a large pot and good care, it can be grown along wires to cover a wall, or train it over a large hoop or on a trellis and prune the stems regularly to keep it more compact.



WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn; allow the top to dry out between waterings in winter. Stand on a tray of damp pebbles and mist the leaves every day or two in summer.

FEEDING Apply a high-potash liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a pot that fits the root ball in soil-based compost. Set in bright filtered light, out of direct sun. Keep plants cool in summer – around 21–23°C (70–73°F) is ideal – and a little cooler still (but not cold) in winter. Trim back lightly in spring, and replace large, overgrown plants. Repot every 2–3 years or renew the top layer of compost each spring.



SILVER-INCH PLANT

Tradescantia zebrina AGM

TEMPERATURE 12–24°C (54–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low to moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 15 x 60cm (6 x 24in)

The gently trailing stems of the silver-inch plant make a striking feature in a hanging basket or pot on a shelf in a bright room. The fleshy silver and green striped leaves are purple when young, and the undersides remain purple as they mature, creating a colourful three-toned effect. Small pinkish-purple flowers appear throughout the year.

WATERING From spring to autumn, water when the top of the compost is almost dry; in winter, reduce so that the compost is just moist. Mist the leaves every few days in spring and summer.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to early autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a 3:1 mix of soil-based compost and sharp sand or perlite and a 15–20cm (6–8in) pot. In summer, stand in bright filtered light, out of direct sun. Trim the stem tips in spring to maintain bushy growth. Repot every 2–3 years or when root-bound.

CARNIVOROUS PLANTS

These fascinating plants make intriguing house plants. They have developed a range of colourful pitchers or sticky leaves and stems to trap and consume insects and other small creatures, which provide them with essential nutrients. Most need boggy soil to thrive, and some require more specialist care, so check that you can provide the conditions they need.

CALIFORNIA PITCHER PLANT

Darlingtonia californica AGM

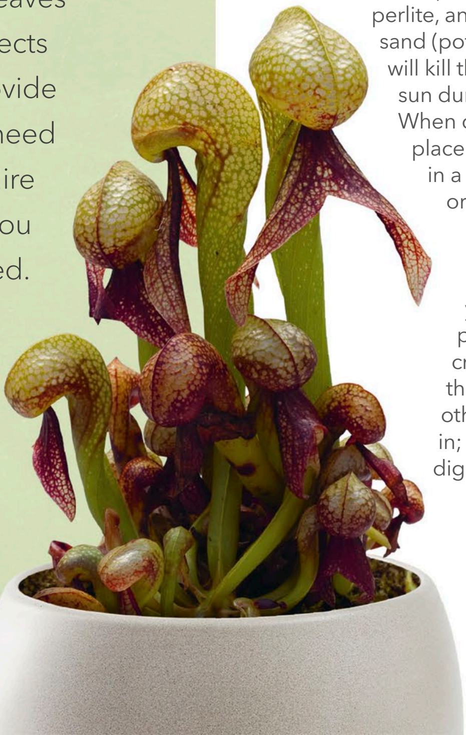
TEMPERATURE -5–26°C (23–78°F)
LIGHT Sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Challenging
HEIGHT & SPREAD 40 x 20cm (14 x 8in)

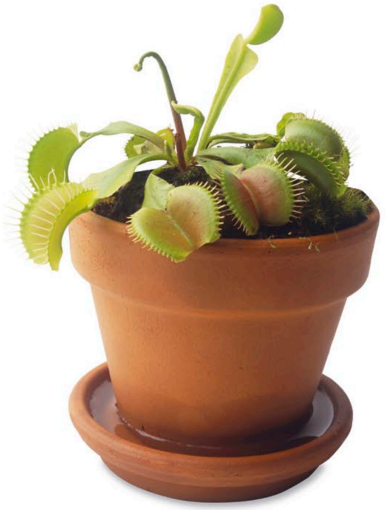
Also known as the cobra lily, the pitchers of this unusual plant are hooded and feature fang-like structures that resemble a snake's head. Purple-veined flowers appear in spring, followed by red-veined pitchers that emit a honey scent to attract their prey. This plant is quite demanding, so ensure you can offer the exacting conditions it needs.

WATERING Water your plant daily with rainwater or distilled water, or set in a shallow water-filled tray.

FEEDING Do not feed this pitcher plant.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in an equal mix of sphagnum moss, perlite, and horticultural sand (potting compost will kill this plant). Set in sun during the summer. When dormant in winter, place the plant outside in a sheltered area or in a cold, bright, unheated room. You may see tiny insects if you look into the pitchers. These little creatures live inside the plant and eat other prey that fall in; the pitcher then digests their faeces.





VENUS FLY TRAP

Dionaea muscipula

TEMPERATURE 9–27°C (48–80°F)
LIGHT Sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 10 x 20cm (4 x 8in)

This plant's snapping jaw-like leaves trap flying insects that come within reach, but it will soon die if coaxed to perform this trick too often. It has two types of leaf: the spring foliage is broader and produces traps close to the centre of the plant, while the summer leaves are longer and develop red-tinged traps further away. White tubular flowers appear in spring.

WATERING Place the pot in a deep tray of rainwater or distilled water from spring to late summer; from autumn to late winter, when dormant, remove it from the tray but keep the growing medium moist.

FEEDING Do not feed Venus fly traps.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a 10–15cm (4–6in) pot, in a 50:50 mix of sphagnum moss and perlite; potting compost will kill the plant. Place in a sunny spot and open windows regularly to allow insects in. Remove the flowers, which can weaken the plant. In winter, when dormant, move it away from radiators and heaters. Repot every year in late winter or early spring.

CAPE SUNDEW

Drosera capensis

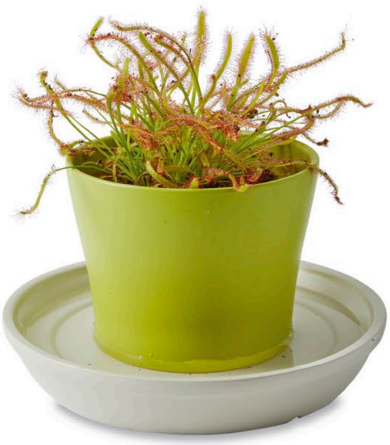
TEMPERATURE 7–29°C (45–85°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 15 x 20cm (6 x 8in)

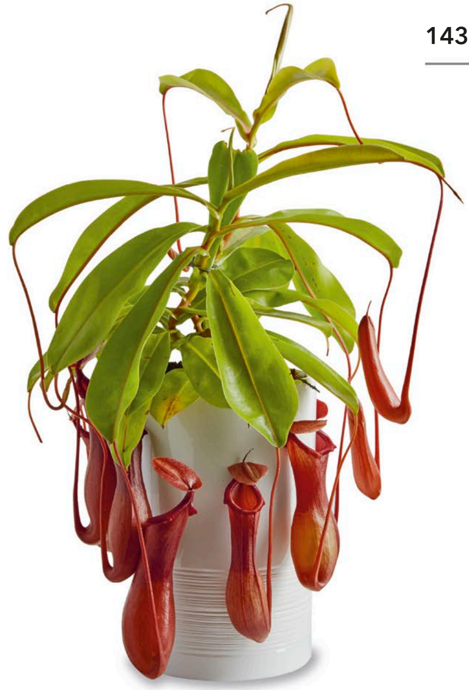
The easiest sundew to grow, this plant's long slim leaves are covered with colourful tentacles that produce a sticky mucilage that looks like drops of water (hence the name). The leaves ensnare insects and then curl around their trapped prey, which is then slowly absorbed by the plant. In late spring or early summer, pink flowers appear that last just one day, opening in the morning then closing in the afternoon.

WATERING Set the pot in a deep tray of rainwater or distilled water. In its natural habitat, the plant is dormant in winter and requires less water, but in a warm home, leave it in its water tray to continue growing throughout the year.

FEEDING Do not feed Cape sundews.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a tall 10–15cm (4–6in) pot in an equal mix of sphagnum moss and perlite; potting compost will kill the plant. Set in a bright spot and open windows regularly to allow insects in. These will be attracted to the plant, which needs just 2–3 per month to survive. Remove dead leaves and repot annually in fresh growing medium. Remove flowers to prevent self-seeding.





MONKEY CUPS

Nepenthes hybrids

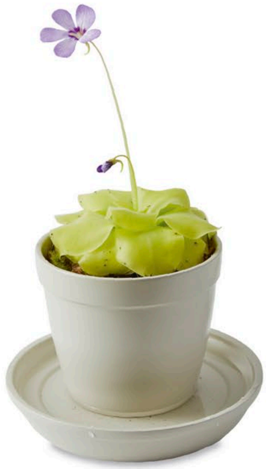
TEMPERATURE 13–25°C (55–77°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate to high
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 30 x 45cm (12 x 18in)

The dark red pitchers that dangle from slender stems of this unusual tropical plant look otherworldly, emerging from the tips of spear-shaped green leaves. The pitchers' colour and nectar attracts insects, which drown when they fall in.

WATERING Never stand in a tray of water but keep the compost moist. Water from above with rainwater or distilled water. Mist daily or set on a tray of damp pebbles.

FEEDING Apply a pre-mixed foliar feed spray and mist the leaves every 2 weeks. You can give it an occasional fresh fly or insect, although this is rarely needed.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a pot or hanging basket using nepenthes compost (chopped pine bark, sphagnum moss, and perlite) from a specialist supplier; potting compost will kill the plant. Set in a bright spot out of direct sun with good ventilation. Repot every 2–3 years when root-bound.



BUTTERWORT

Pinguicula – Mexican hybrids

TEMPERATURE 18–29°C (65–85°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 15 x 10cm (6 x 4in)

The delicate small red, pink, or blue flowers that appear on this plant in summer belie its grisly secret. They are held on slim stems above a rosette of lime green or bronze foliage, which is covered with a sticky mucilage that traps insects, such as fungus gnats. An enzyme in the leaves then digests the prey.

WATERING Keep moist by watering from above with rainwater or distilled water. When the plant is dormant, usually in winter, reduce watering, allowing the top of the compost to dry out between waterings.

FEEDING No fertilizer is required, as most homes harbour a few insects; butterworts need just 2–3 insects per month to thrive.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a small 10–15cm (4–6in) pot in specialist carnivorous plant compost or a 3:1:1 mix of silica sand, sphagnum moss, and perlite (never use potting compost). Set in bright filtered light, out of direct summer sun. Plants can become dormant at any time of the year when they grow small fleshy leaves. Repot when dormant.

NORTH AMERICAN PITCHER PLANTS

Sarracenia species and hybrids

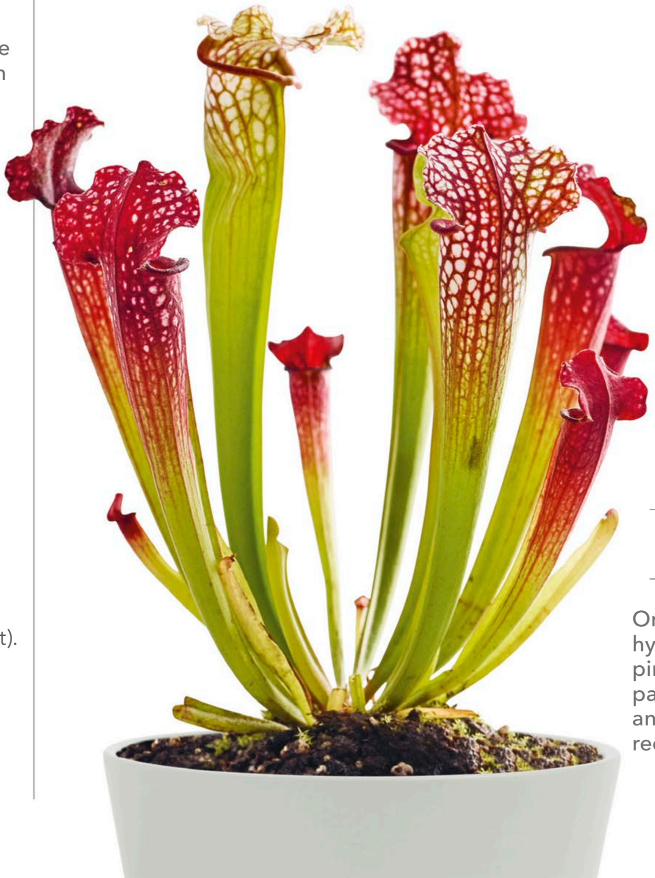
TEMPERATURE -5–25°C (23–77°F)
LIGHT Sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD: Up to 30 x 15cm (12 x 6in)

These colourful carnivorous plants come in a range of sizes, and produce pitchers in shades of burgundy, red, pink, and green, often with decorative vein patterns. The nectar around the pitcher mouth lures insects, which then fall in. While some *Sarracenia* will grow happily outside in boggy soil, those from warmer climes make fascinating house plants for a cool, bright room or an unheated conservatory (they need cool winters). Pendulous red or green flowers appear in summer.

WATERING In summer, stand the plant pot in a tray of rainwater or distilled water about 1–2cm (¼–½in) deep. In winter, remove the plant from the tray and keep the compost just moist.

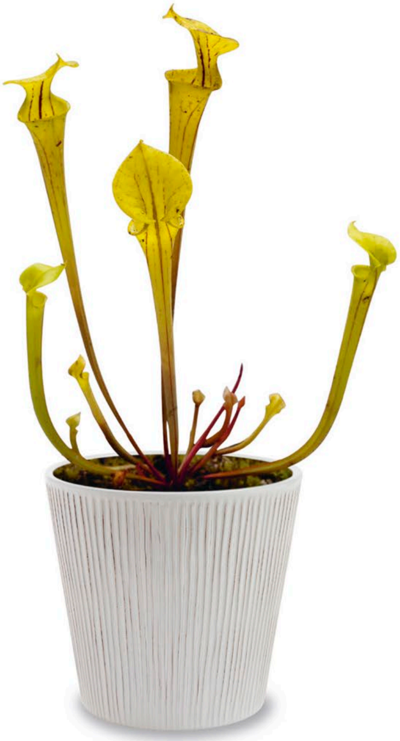
FEEDING Do not use a fertilizer on this plant; stand it outside or on a windowsill in summer, which will provide it with plenty of insect prey.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a small to medium-sized 10–15cm (4–6in) plastic pot in a specialist compost mix from a carnivorous plant supplier (or a 2:1:1 mix of fine fir bark, coarse lime-free grit, and perlite). Do not use potting compost, which will kill the plant. In late autumn, it will become dormant and should be moved to a cool, bright room at 10°C (50°F) or colder until early spring. Repot every 2–3 years when dormant in autumn, but do not plant in a large container, as it needs to be quite root-bound to thrive.



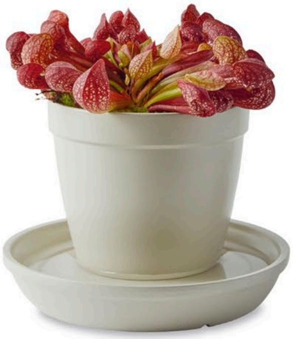
Sarracenia mitchelliana 'Bella' AGM

One of the many beautiful hybrids, 'Bella' has bright pink, red, and white vein patterns on the pitchers and lids, and bears bright red flowers in spring.



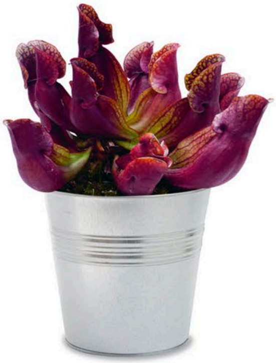
Sarracenia flava

The elegant yellow pitcher plant has tall, slender yellow-green pitchers with upright lids, and nodding yellow flowers in spring.



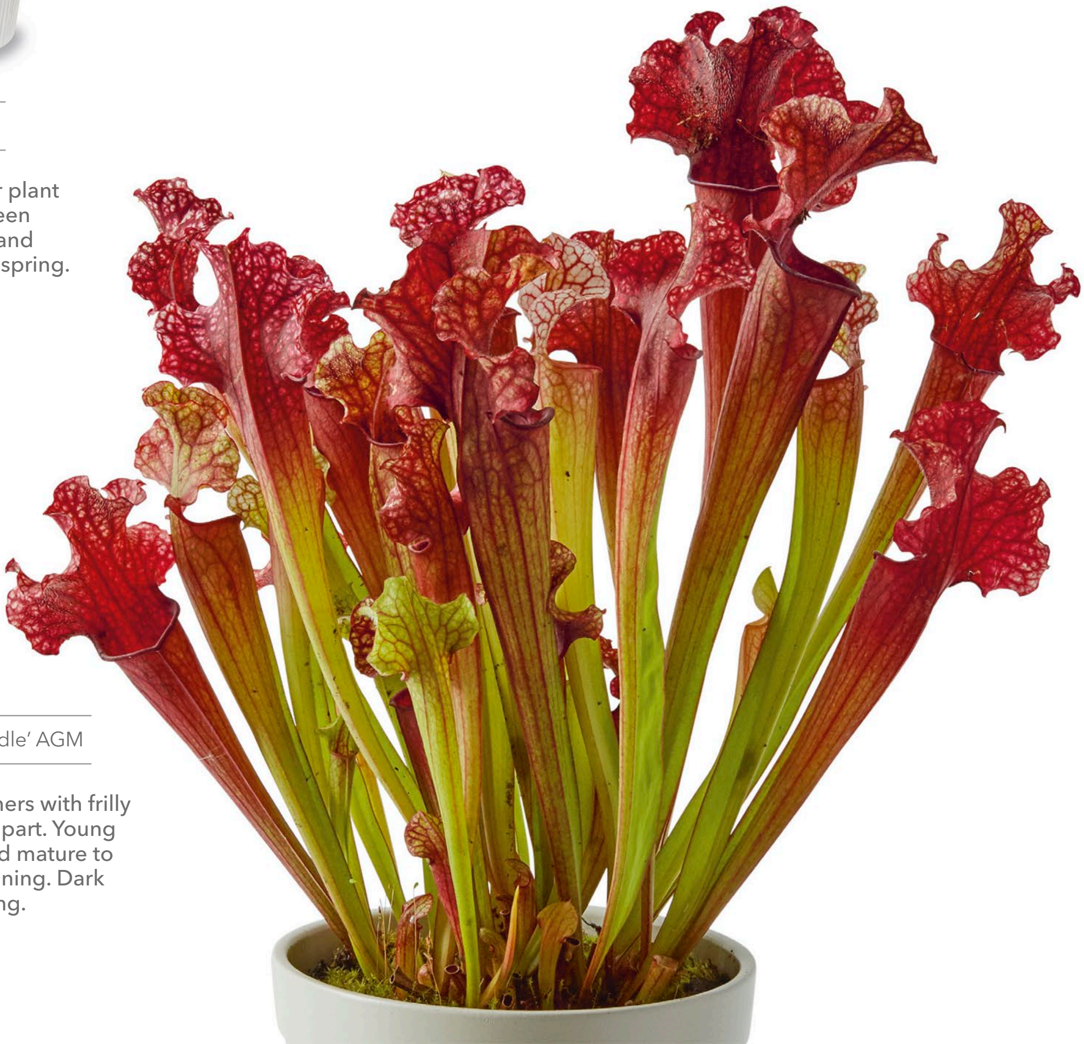
Sarracenia psittacina

Known as the parrot pitcher plant, this type will catch crawling insects with its rosette of decoratively veined red, white, or green horizontal traps. The dark spring flowers can vary in colour.



Sarracenia purpurea

The purple pitcher plant has short, fat pitchers in a deep burgundy colour, with dark red or pink flowers in spring. It is quite hardy and can also be grown outside in the garden or on a patio.

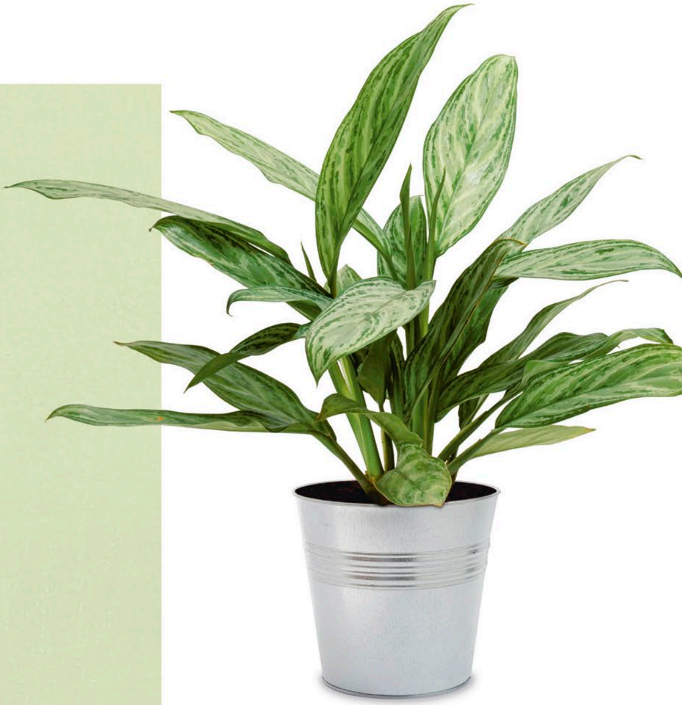


Sarracenia 'Judith Hindle' AGM

The profusion of slim pitchers with frilly lids set this pretty hybrid apart. Young pitchers emerge green and mature to dark red, with marbled veining. Dark red flowers appear in spring.

FOLIAGE PLANTS

These leafy plants can be used as focal points or grouped together to create a calming green oasis. Choose a selection of plain-leaved types to create a simple backdrop for more intricately patterned foliage plants or add bright blooms to create a colourful display. Many foliage plants are easy to care for, with a few exceptions, and most are happy in rooms that receive little direct sunlight.



CHINESE EVERGREEN

Aglaonema commutatum

TEMPERATURE 16–25°C (60–77°F)
LIGHT Light shade/Shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD up to 45cm x 45cm (18in x 18in)
WARNING! All parts are poisonous

This elegant plant has spear-shaped leaves, with silver, cream, or pink patterning. All varieties are easy to care for, given warmth and sufficient moisture. Remove the small flowers to divert the plant's energy into growing leaves.

WATERING Keep the compost moist, but do not leave the pot in standing water, which may cause it to rot. In winter, allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings. Mist twice a week.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a 15–20cm (6–8in) pot in soil-based compost mixed with a handful or two of perlite. Set in light shade, or slightly darker shade, and keep out of draughts. Repot every 3 years in spring.

AMAZONIAN ELEPHANT'S EAR

Alocasia × amazonica AGM

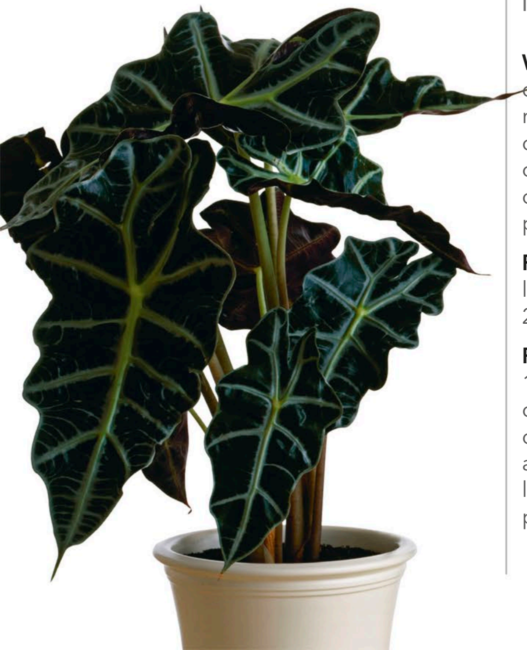
TEMPERATURE 18–25°C (65–77°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY High
CARE Challenging
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 1.2 x 1m (4 x 3ft)
WARNING! All parts are poisonous

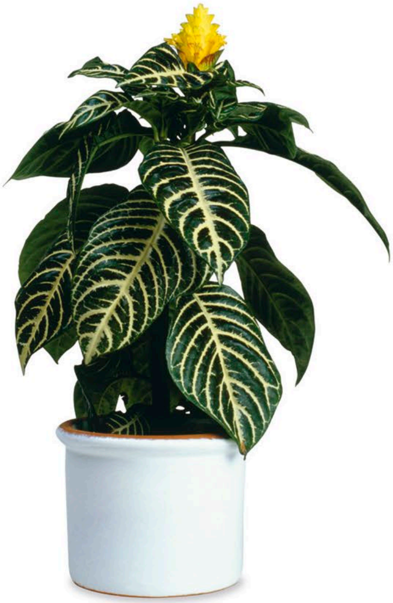
This showstopper has large, dramatic foliage that sets it apart from the crowd. The arrow-shaped dark green leaves are purple beneath and feature distinctive silver vein patterns and wavy edges. Remove the small flowers to allow the plant to focus its energy on the foliage.

WATERING Use rainwater or distilled water to keep the compost moist from spring to autumn; in winter, allow the top to dry out between waterings. Mist the leaves every day and set on a tray of damp pebbles, or install a room humidifier.

FEEDING Feed every 2–3 weeks from spring to early autumn with a balanced liquid fertilizer.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in an equal mix of composted bark, soil-based compost and sand in a 25–30cm (8–10in) pot. Set in a bright area, out of direct sun and draughts. Repot every 2–3 years.





ZEBRA PLANT

Aphelandra squarrosa

TEMPERATURE 13–25°C (55–77°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate to high
CARE Challenging
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 60cm (24 x 24in)

With dazzling striped green and cream foliage, this plant is ideal for a bathroom with high humidity. The colourful autumn flowers are composed of yellow bracts (modified petal-like leaves) around small orange blooms.

WATERING Using rainwater or distilled water, keep the compost moist; dryness may cause leaf drop. In winter, water when the top of the compost is almost dry. Mist daily and set on a tray of damp pebbles, or install a humidifier.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer once every 2 weeks during spring and summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a 15–20cm (6–8in) pot in soil-based compost. Set in a bright spot, out of direct sun. Remove faded flower stems, and then prune to leave two sets of leaves at the bottom of the stems to keep plants compact. Repot annually in spring.

CAST IRON PLANT

Aspidistra elatior AGM

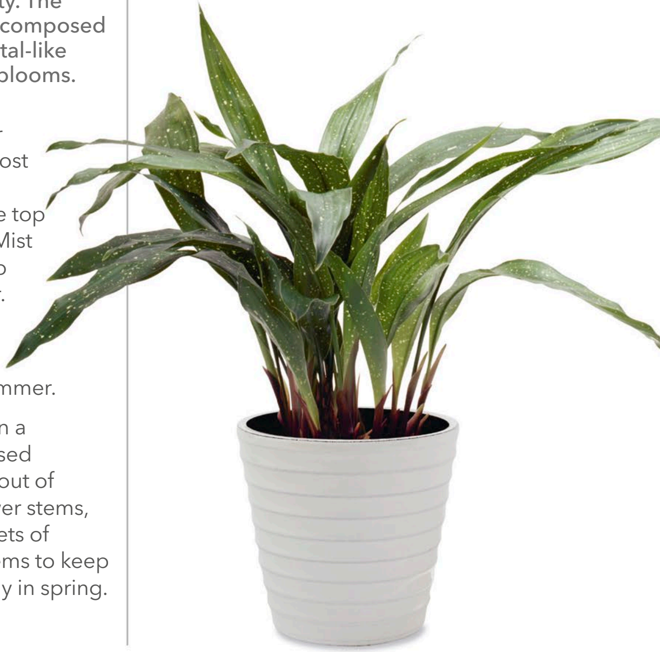
TEMPERATURE 5–20°C (41–68°F)
LIGHT Light shade/Shade
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 60cm (24 x 24in)

Ideal for beginners, the cast iron plant is almost foolproof, and can be tucked into shady areas where few others will thrive. While the plain green type is not very exciting, plants with cream splashes, stripes or spots, inject more drama into a display.

WATERING Water when the top of the compost is dry; reduce watering in winter. Never allow the compost to become waterlogged or soggy.

FEEDING From spring to late summer, apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a 50:50 mix of soil-based and multipurpose composts and a 12.5–20cm (5–8in) pot. Set in a lightly shaded area, well away from direct sun. Repot every 2–3 years in a container just one size larger than the original.



PAINTED LEAF BEGONIAS

Begonia species

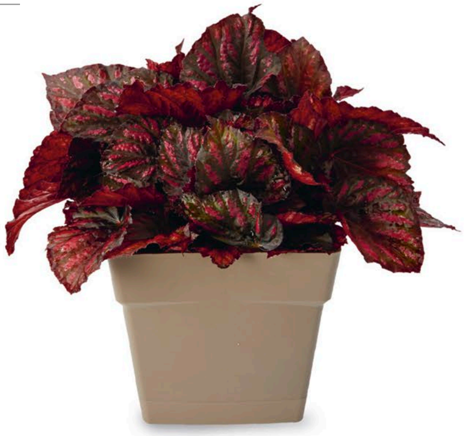
TEMPERATURE 15–22°C (58–72°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 90 x 45cm (36 x 18in)
WARNING! The roots are toxic

Forget the flowery bedding plants you see in summer; these demure beauties offer a completely different look. Celebrated for their decorative patterned foliage and small elegant flowers, there are hundreds of colours and forms to choose from. Most are derived from the *Begonia rex* species, which are also known as angel wing begonias because of the shape of their leaves. Taller cane types, such as the polka dot begonia, add structure to an indoor display, and have slightly large flowers. Plants grow from tubers but most are for sale as young plants.

WATERING Keep the compost moist, but not wet, from spring to autumn; allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings in winter. Stand on a tray of damp pebbles, but do not mist the leaves.

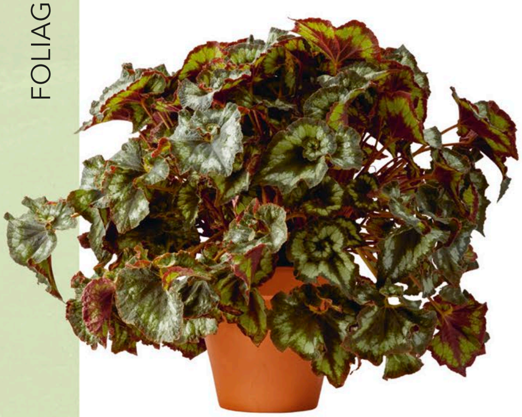
FEEDING Feed every 2 weeks from late spring to early autumn with a high nitrogen fertilizer. For begonias with larger flowers, switch to a high potash feed when the buds appear, and use this until the blooms fade.

PLANTING AND CARE Choose a pot that accommodates the plant's root ball easily. Plant in a 50:50 mix of soil-based and multipurpose composts. Set in filtered sun or light shade and keep away from radiators and heaters in winter. Repot when root-bound in spring.



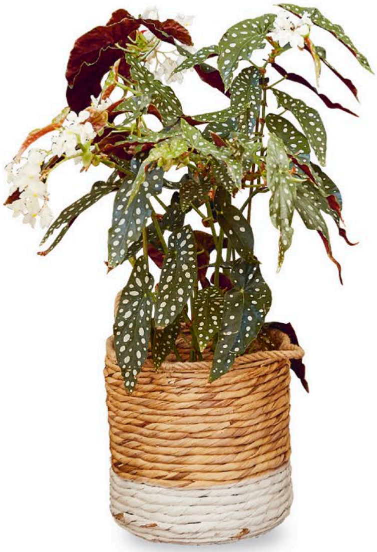
Begonia 'Rumba'

One of the many red-leaved *Rex* begonias, this elegant beauty has rich, pink-red foliage with near-black markings, and red undersides. Stand it in filtered sun for the best colours.



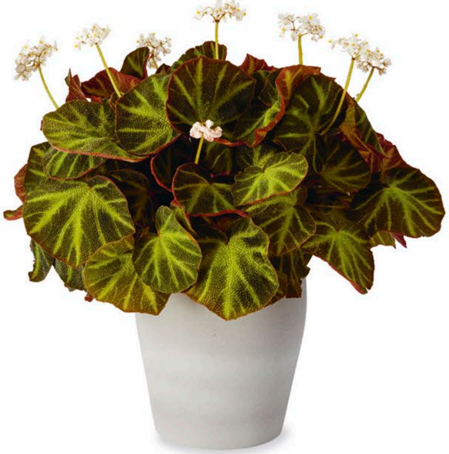
Begonia 'Escargot'

One of the *Rex* begonias, this popular variety has green and silver leaves that form a swirling pattern, like a snail's shell. The textured foliage is also covered with delicate pink hairs.



Begonia maculata

Known as the polka dot begonia, this large cane type is a real show-off, with its large green and white spotty leaves and cascading trusses of small cream flowers, which appear in summer. Its long stems will need staking.



Begonia soli-mutata

Few plants can beat this unusual begonia for leaf texture. While the dark burgundy and bright green markings on the heart-shaped foliage catch the eye, a closer inspection reveals the rough, sandpaper-like surface.

CROTON

Codiaeum variegatum

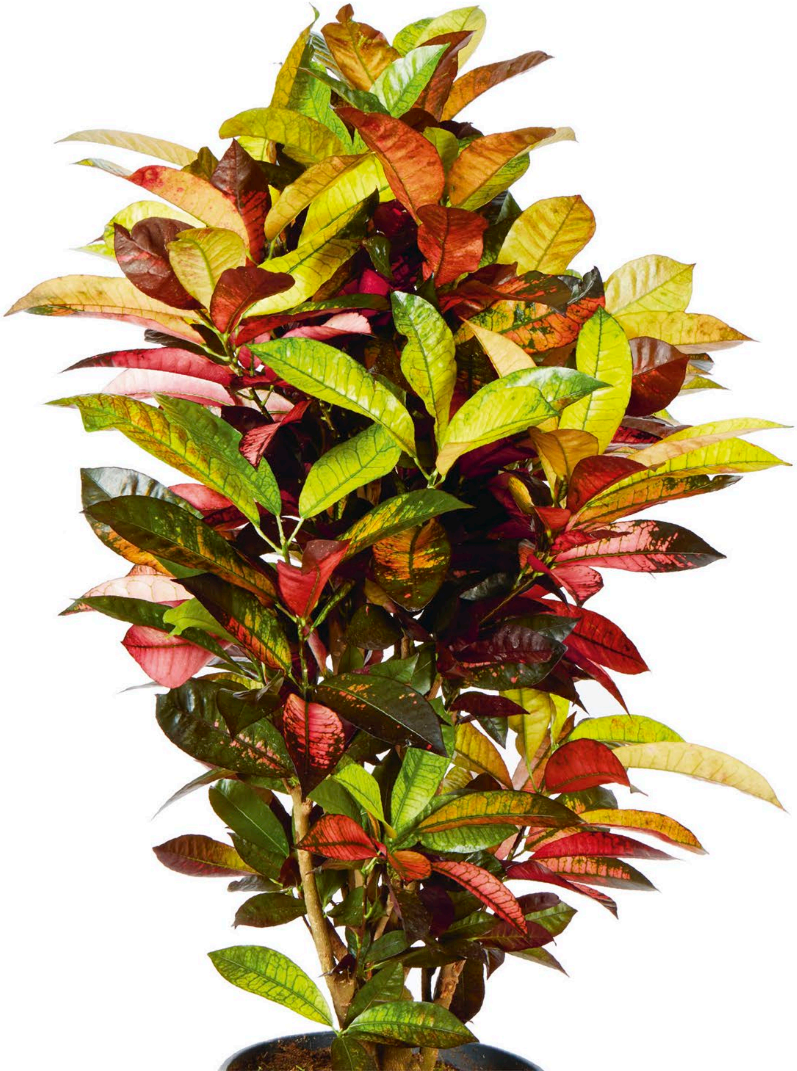
TEMPERATURE 15–25°C (60–76°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY High
CARE Challenging
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 1.5 x 0.75m (5ft x 2ft 6in)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

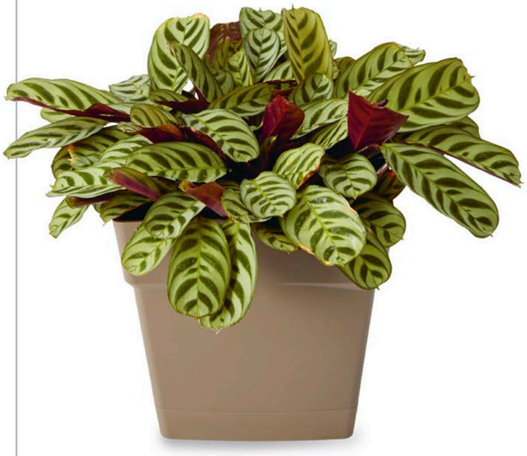
The bright red, yellow, and green spear-shaped or lobed leaves of this potentially large shrub look best when set centre stage against a neutral backdrop. Not the easiest plant to grow, it demands high humidity and constant warmth – a bathroom would make an ideal home.

WATERING Keep the compost moist with tepid water from spring to autumn; allow the top to dry out betwee waterings in winter. Set it on a tray of damp pebbles, but do not mist the leaves.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in soil-based compost in a pot that will accommodate the root ball. Repot every 2–3 years. Set in bright filtered light, away from draughts and heaters, and in constant warmth – never below 15°C (60°F). Wearing gloves, trim to keep it to size.





NEVER-NEVER PLANT

Ctenanthe burle-marxii

TEMPERATURE 10–25°C (50–76°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 45cm (24 x 18in)

The never-never plant's profusion of striped dark and pale green leaves are given an extra lift with a splash of red on the undersides, lending a three-tone effect. This undemanding, compact plant adds a glamorous note to a bright room.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn, but allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings in winter. If the leaves roll up, add more water. Mist occasionally or stand on a tray of damp pebbles.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer monthly from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a 12.5–15cm (5–6in) pot in an equal mix of soil-based and multipurpose composts. Repot every 2–3 years when the plant becomes root-bound.

DUMB CANE

Dieffenbachia seguine

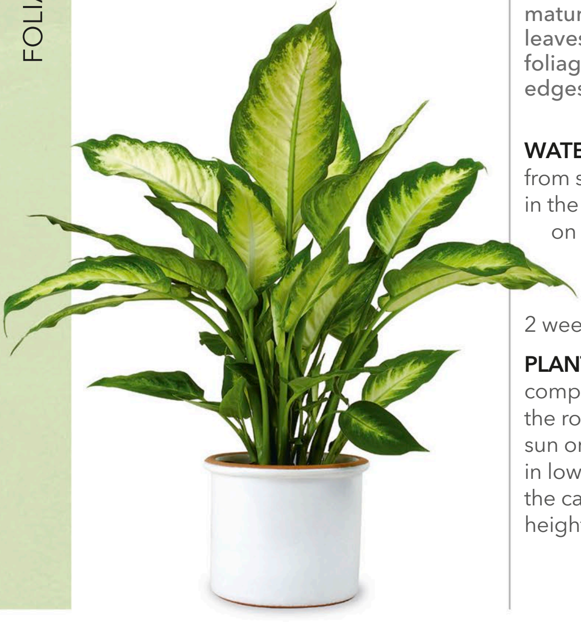
TEMPERATURE 16–23°C (61–73°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 1.5 x 1m (5 x 3ft)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

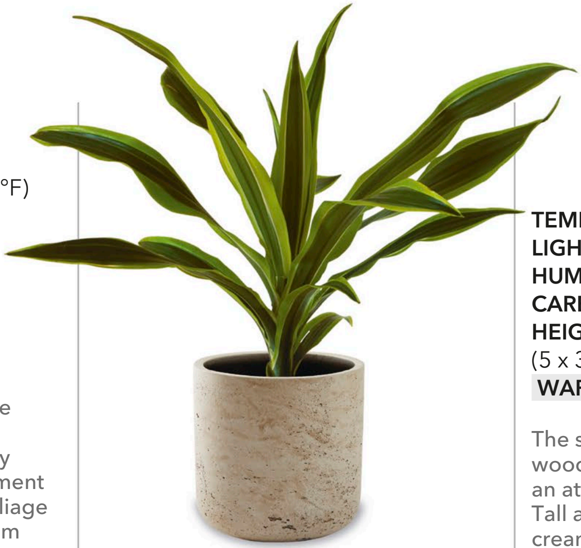
The huge, patterned leaves of the dumb cane create an impressive feature in a large room or hallway in need of an eye-catching statement plant. The green, oval-shaped foliage features a splash or spots of cream in the centre.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn, and just moist in winter. Stand on a tray of damp pebbles or mist occasionally.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer every month from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in soil-based compost in a pot that fits the root ball. Stand in filtered sun or light shade; it will survive in gloomier spots but may not grow much. Wear gloves when pruning as the sap is toxic. Repot when root-bound every 2–3 years.





DRAGON PLANT

Dracaena fragrans

TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Low to moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 1.2 x 0.9m (4 x 3ft)
WARNING! All parts are toxic for pets

A great choice for beginners looking for a stalwart with foliage interest, the dragon plant produces fountains of strappy, variegated leaves, which form a rosette atop tall, cane-like stems on mature plants. Choose from green leaves with a yellow central stripe, or foliage with green and yellow striped edges and a dark green centre.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn, and just moist in the winter. Mist occasionally or set on a tray of damp pebbles.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in soil-based compost in a pot large enough to hold the root ball. Plants thrive best in filtered sun or light shade, but also grow well in lower light conditions. Cut the top of the canes when they reach a desirable height. Repot every 2–3 years.

MADAGASCAR DRAGON TREE

Dracaena marginata

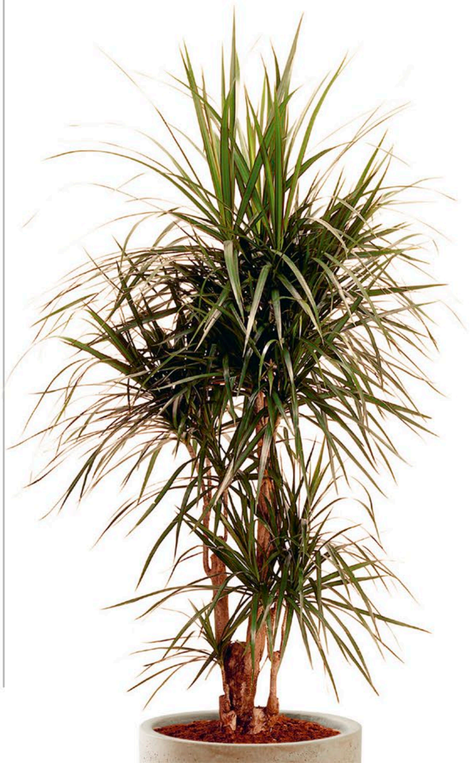
TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Low to moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 1.5 x 0.9m (5 x 3ft)
WARNING! All parts are toxic for pets

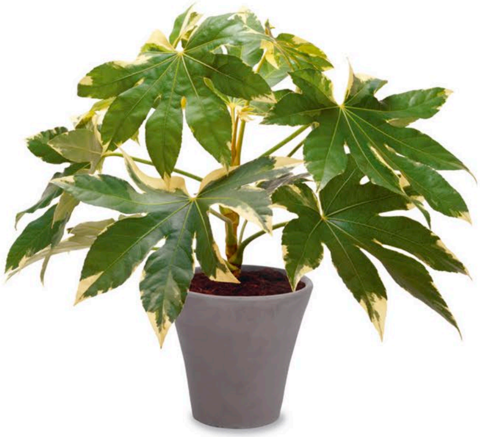
The sprays of spiky leaves held on woody stems lend this popular plant an attractive, palm-like appearance. Tall and stately, with green, pink, and cream striped foliage, it is one of the best plants for removing toxins from the air. It is also very easy to grow.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn, and just moist in the winter.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in soil-based compost in a pot that will fit the root ball. Prune the stems to limit the plant's size. Repot every 3 years or when root-bound.





JAPANESE ARALIA

Fatsia japonica

TEMPERATURE 10–25°C (60–76°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Low to moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 2 x 2m (6 x 6ft)

The Japanese aralia is perfect for a room in light shade, since its large, glossy, hand-shaped leaves thrive in low-light conditions. Choose from dark green or variegated leaves – the latter will need a little more light to retain their colours. Spherical cream flowers may appear in autumn. This relatively undemanding plant is a great choice for beginners.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn, and just moist in the winter.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to late summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a pot large enough to accommodate the root ball with an equal mix of soil-based and ericaceous composts. Set in filtered sun or light shade; move the plant to a cool room in winter. Trim back to keep the plant in check. Repot every 2–3 years.

WEEPING FIG

Ficus benjamina

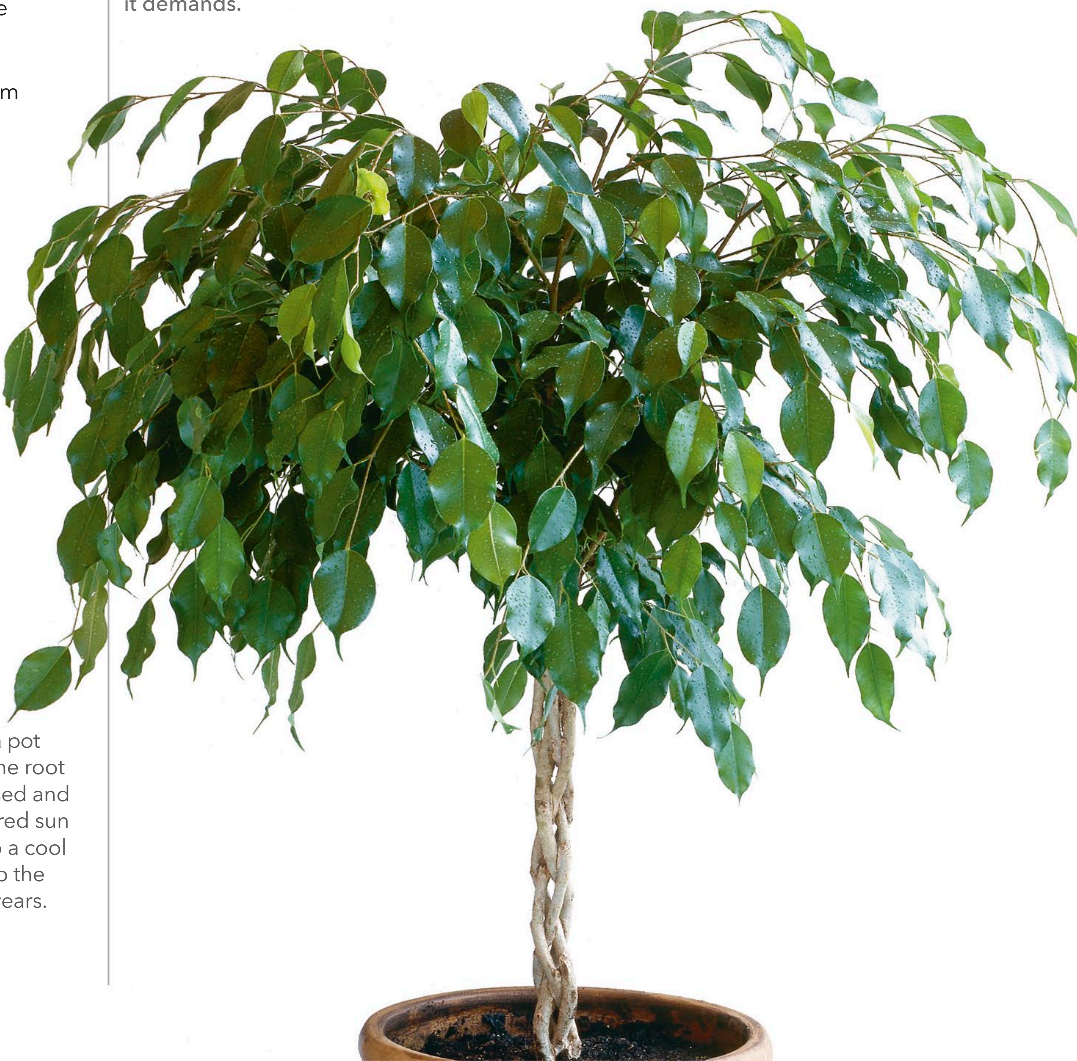
TEMPERATURE 16–24°C (65–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Challenging
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 3.5 x 1.2m (10 x 4ft)
WARNING! All parts are poisonous

Tall and elegant, this plant should be given space to show off its arching stems of small green or variegated, cream leaves. Not the easiest of plants, it has a tendency to drop its leaves, but makes a striking focal point if you can provide the exact conditions it demands.

WATERING Use tepid rainwater or distilled water and allow the top of the compost to dry out between each watering. Keep just moist in winter. Mist the leaves in summer.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in soil-based compost in a pot that fits the root ball. Do not move or repot plants, as this can lead to leaf drop. In spring, replace the top layer of compost.



INDIA RUBBER PLANT

Ficus elastica

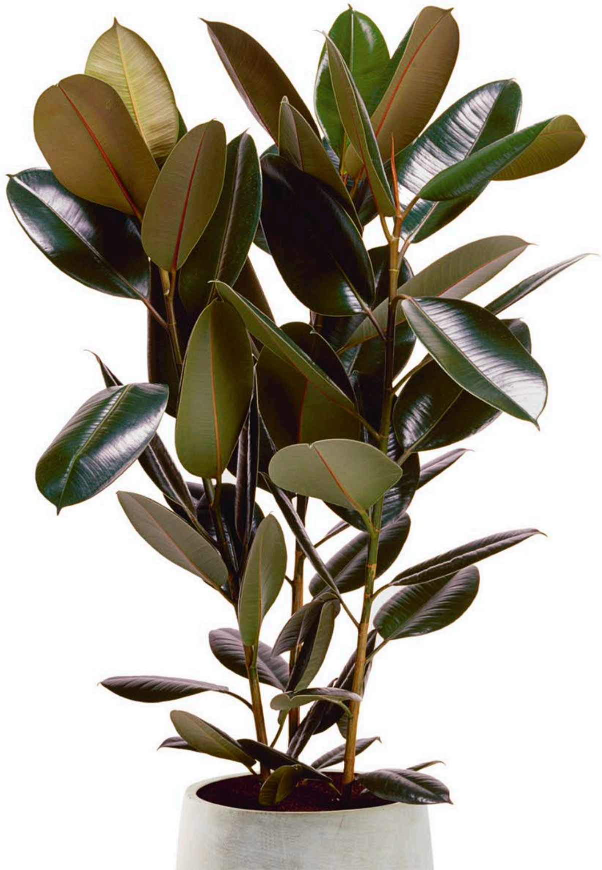
TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Low to moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 1.8 x 1.2m (6 x 4ft)
WARNING! The sap is an irritant

Popular for its broad, glossy, dark green leaves and easy-going nature, the India rubber plant brings a tree-like shape to a group of smaller plants and tolerates low-light conditions. Rubber plants with variegated leaves will need more light, but all types are drought-tolerant.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings, and keep it just moist in winter. Mist the leaves every few days in summer.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in soil-based compost with some perlite for added drainage in a pot large enough to accommodate the root ball. Set in filtered sun or light shade, away from draughts. Prune to keep the plant size in check. Repot every 2–3 years when root-bound.



FIDDLE-LEAF FIG

Ficus lyrata AGM

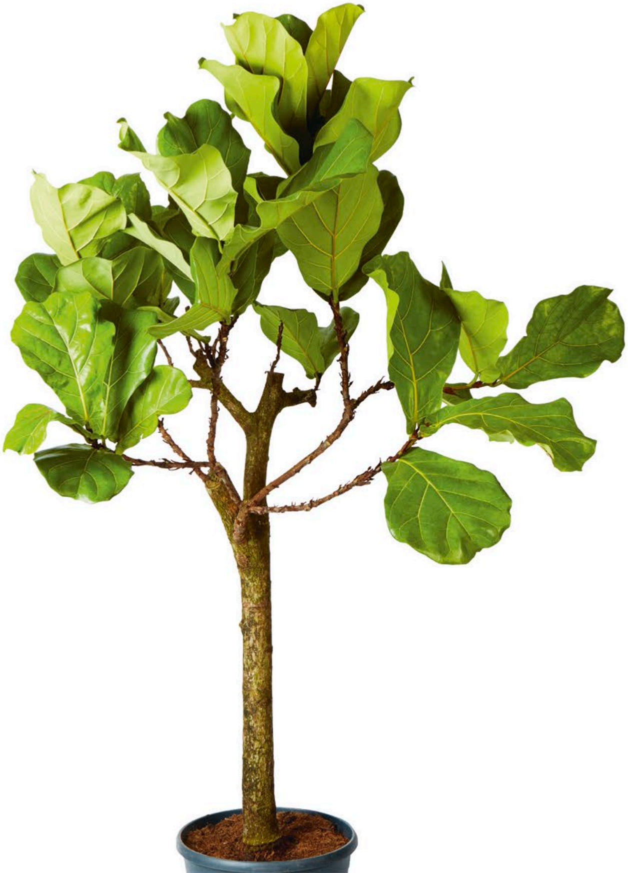
TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low to moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 1.8 x 1.2m (6 x 4ft)
WARNING! The sap is an irritant

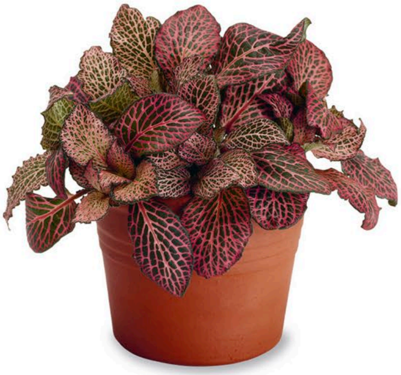
The large, slightly lobed leaves of this tall, stately plant are shaped like a violin or fiddle, hence the name. They also have distinctive pale veins and the stems sprout from a sturdy, tree-like trunk. The plant is also available in the more compact ‘Bambino’ form.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings from spring to autumn, and keep just moist in winter. Ensure you do not overwater the plant, as the roots will rot in soggy conditions.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a 3:1 mix of soil-based compost and perlite in a pot that fits the root ball. Place in indirect light, away from direct sun and draughts. In winter, move it away from heaters. Repot every 2–3 years when root-bound.





MOSAIC PLANT

Fittonia albivenis Verschaffeltii Group AGM

TEMPERATURE 17–26°C (62–79°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY High
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 15 x 20cm (6 x 8in)

The beautiful patterns on the foliage of the mosaic plant make a striking feature. It is small enough for any room, but demands high humidity so it is best kept in a bathroom, kitchen, or terrarium. The dark or pale green leaves have bright pink veins and make a good match for the aluminium plant (*Pilea cadierei*), which is also small and requires similar conditions.

WATERING Keep the compost moist year-round but avoid waterlogging – yellow leaves can indicate overwatering. Mist the plant daily and place on a tray of damp pebbles, or install a humidifier.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in soil-based compost in a small 7.5–10cm (3–4in) pot. The mosaic plant thrives in bright filtered light, away from direct sun. Remove the summer flowers to allow the plant to focus on its leaves. It needs warmth and moisture year-round, and high levels of humidity to keep its leaves healthy. Repot every 2–3 years when root-bound.

ETERNAL FLAME

Goeppertia crocata AGM
(syn. *Calathea crocata)*

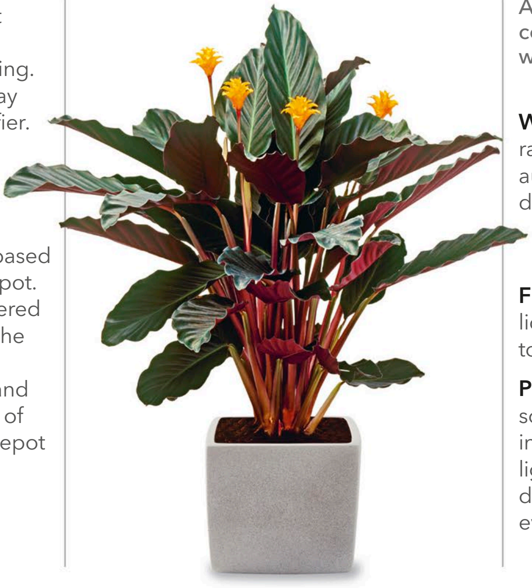
TEMPERATURE 16–24°C (61–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate to high
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 60cm (24 x 24in)

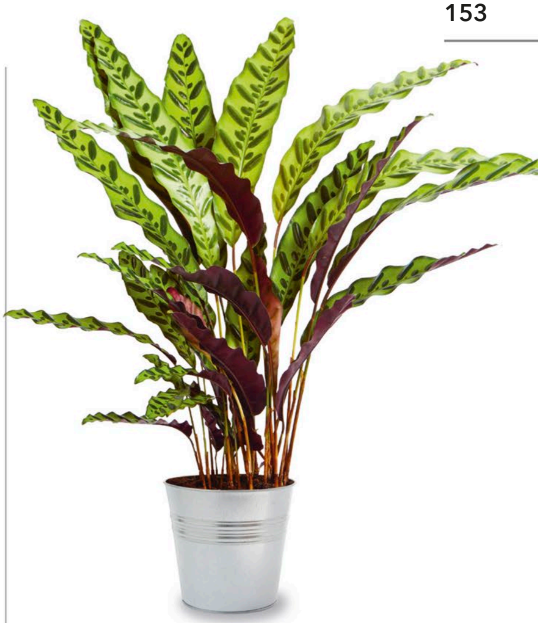
The torch-like orange summer flowers give this plant its name, but it can also be grown for its colourful foliage, which makes a feature in its own right. The broad, oval-shaped, slightly wrinkled leaves are green with a metallic sheen on the upper sides and dark burgundy beneath.

WATERING Keep the compost moist all year round, but guard against waterlogging. Mist daily with tepid water, and place on a tray of damp pebbles.

FEEDING From spring to early autumn, apply a balanced liquid fertilizer monthly.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in soil-based compost in a medium-sized 12.5–15cm (5–6in) pot. Stand in a bright area out of direct sunlight, and in a room with high humidity, such as a bathroom. Make sure that winter temperatures do not dip below 16°C (61°F). Repot every 2–3 years or when root-bound.





RATTLESNAKE PLANT

Goeppertia lancifolia
(syn. *Calathea lancifolia*)

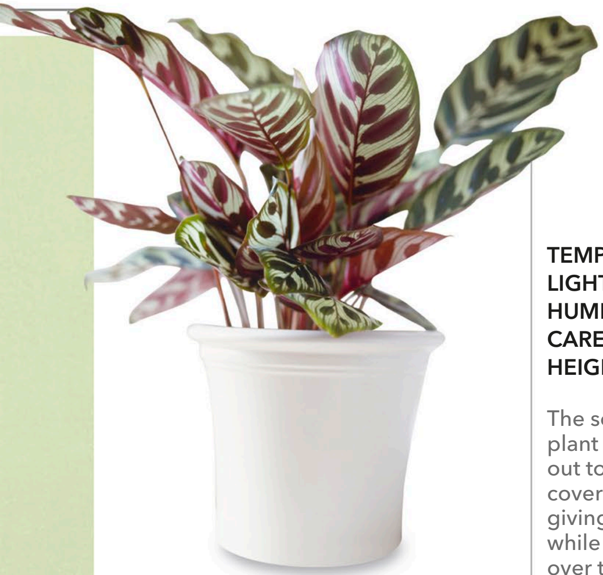
TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 75 x 45cm (30 x 18in)

This plant's star attraction is its dazzling, wavy-edge foliage, with its lime and dark green snake-like markings on the upper surfaces, and burgundy shading beneath. A native of Brazil, it loves warm, humid conditions, so a bathroom or kitchen would make an ideal home.

WATERING Keep the compost moist with rainwater or distilled water from spring to autumn; allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings in winter. Mist daily with tepid water and set on a tray of damp pebbles, or install a humidifier.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Use a 2:1 mix of soil-based compost and perlite and plant in a 12.5–15cm (5–6in) pot. Stand in filtered light or a little shade, out of direct sun and draughts. Keep warm all year round. Repot every 2–3 years when root-bound.



PEACOCK PLANT

Goeppertia makoyana
(syn. *Calathea makoyana*) AGM

TEMPERATURE 16–24°C (61–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY High
CARE Challenging
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 60cm (24 x 24in)

The silver leaves of this crowd-pleaser are impossible to overlook, with dark green brushstrokes on the upper surface and burgundy markings beneath. While not the easiest to care for, the plant's striking appearance makes it well worth the effort.

WATERING Use rainwater or distilled water to keep the compost moist from spring to autumn, and just moist in the winter. Mist daily with tepid water and place on a tray of damp pebbles, or install a humidifier.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a 2:1 mix of soil-based compost and perlite in a 12.5–15cm (5–6in) pot. Set in filtered light or some shade, out of direct sun and draughts. Keep warm all year round. Repot every 2–3 years when root-bound.

VELVET PLANT

Gynura aurantiaca

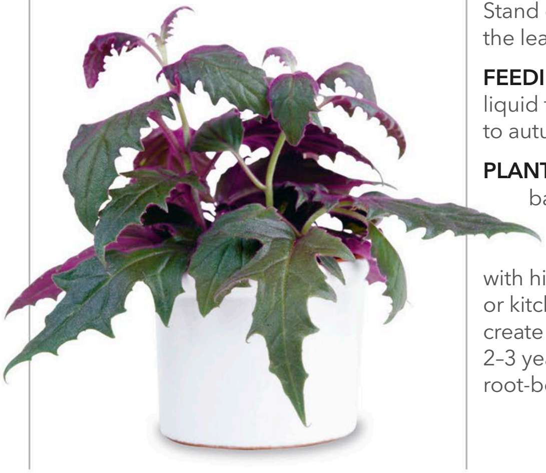
TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 20 x 20cm (8 x 8in)

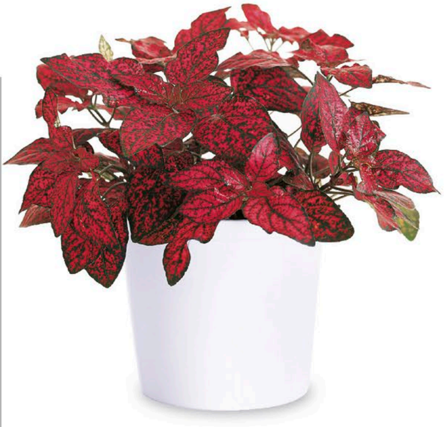
The soft, velvety leaves of this compact plant are simply irresistible and call out to be touched. Fine purple hairs cover the lobed, metallic-green foliage, giving it a downy, two-tone appearance, while the leafy stems will trail elegantly over the sides of a pot.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn, and only just moist in winter. Avoid watering the foliage, which should be kept dry. Set on a tray of damp pebbles but do not mist, as this causes spots on the leaves.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in an equal mix of multipurpose and soil-based composts in a wide 15–20cm (6–8in) pot. Set in filtered light, out of direct sun. Pinch out the stem tips to create a bushier plant, and the yellow flowers, which have a rather unpleasant smell. Repot every 2–3 years or when root-bound.





POLKA DOT PLANT

Hypoestes phyllostachya AGM

TEMPERATURE 18–27°C (65–80°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 25 x 25cm (10 x 10in)

Compact and colourful, this plant's green, heart-shaped leaves are speckled with pink, red, or cream spots, although on many varieties they look more like splashes than the round polka dots suggested by the name. Try a few varieties in different colours in a terrarium or bottle garden. Small magenta flowers appear in summer.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings from spring to autumn, and keep just moist in winter. Stand on a tray of damp pebbles, or mist the leaves every few days.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in soil-based compost in a 12.5–15cm (5–6in) pot. Stand in bright, filtered light, ideally in an area with high humidity, such as a bathroom or kitchen. Pinch out the stem tips to create a bushier plant. Repot every 2–3 years or when the plant becomes root-bound.

PRAYER PLANT

Maranta leuconeura var. *kerchoveana* AGM

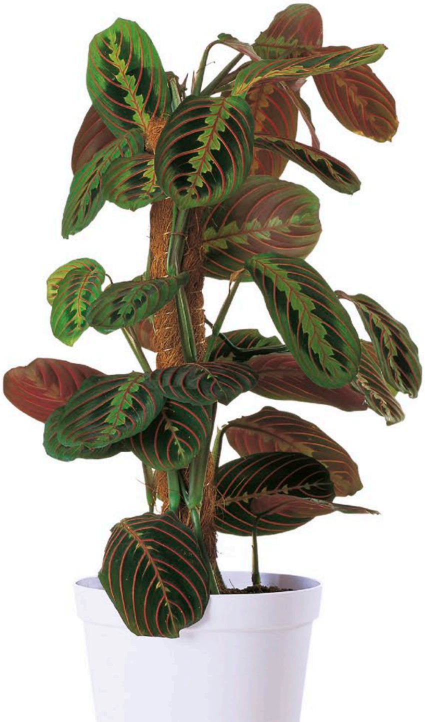
TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 60cm (24 x 24in)

It is difficult to believe that the intricately decorated foliage of this spectacular plant has not been painted by human hands. The oval-shaped leaves feature pale and dark green feathered patterns and red veins on the surface, while the undersides are dark red. To add to its charms, the foliage folds up as if in prayer at night, and unfolds at dawn.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn, and slightly drier in winter. Stand on a tray of damp pebbles and mist the foliage regularly.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in soil-based compost in a shallow 12.5–15cm (5–6in) pot. Set in filtered light, out of direct sun and draughts. Repot every 2–3 years.



MONEY TREE

Pachira aquatica

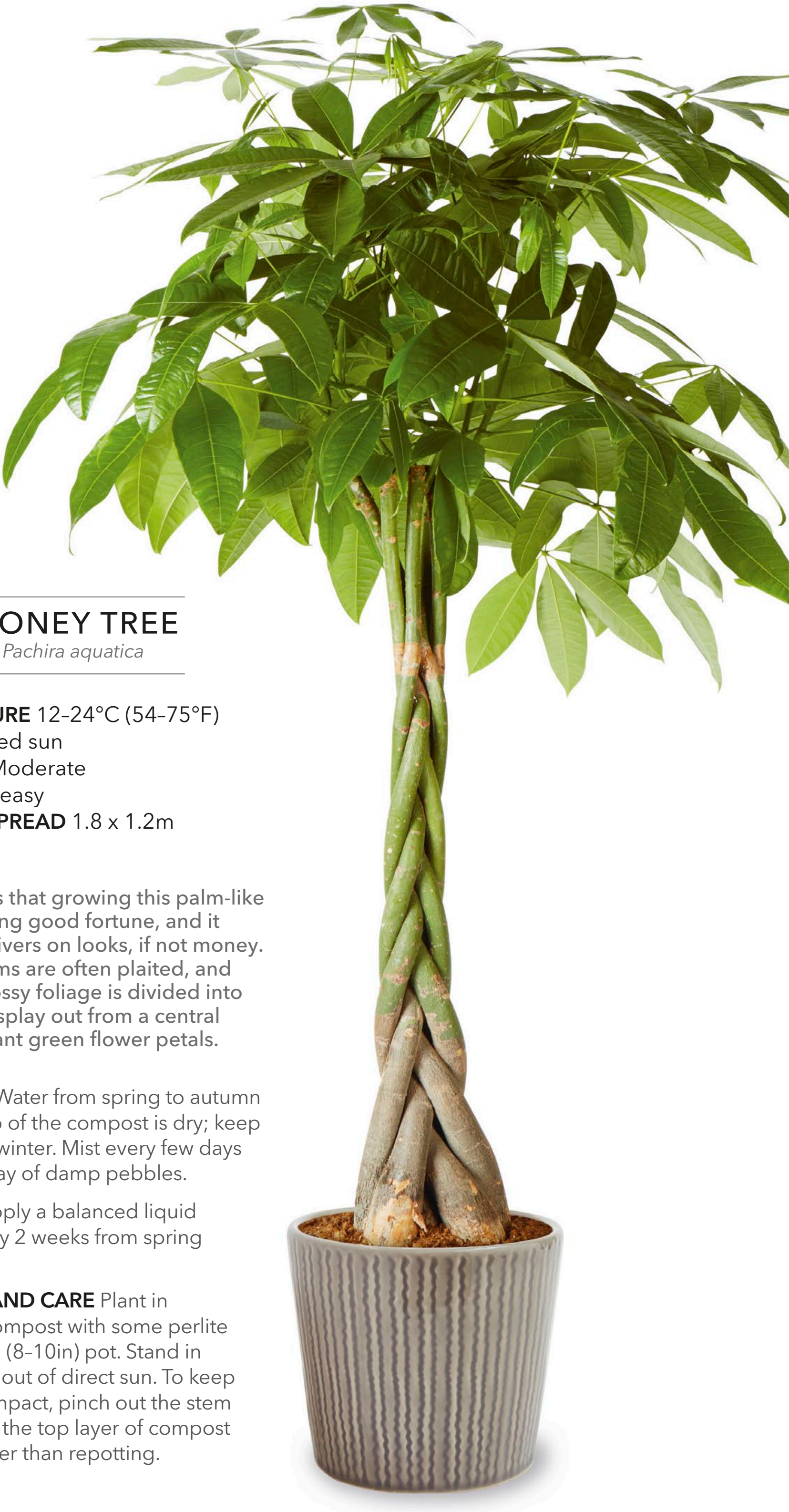
TEMPERATURE 12–24°C (54–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 1.8 x 1.2m (6 x 4ft)

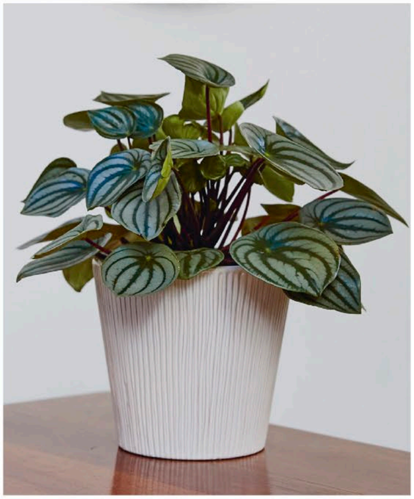
Folklore says that growing this palm-like plant will bring good fortune, and it certainly delivers on looks, if not money. The slim stems are often plaited, and the large glossy foliage is divided into leaflets that splay out from a central point like giant green flower petals.

WATERING Water from spring to autumn when the top of the compost is dry; keep just moist in winter. Mist every few days or set on a tray of damp pebbles.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in soil-based compost with some perlite in a 20–25cm (8–10in) pot. Stand in filtered light, out of direct sun. To keep the plant compact, pinch out the stem tips. Replace the top layer of compost annually rather than repotting.





WATERMELON PEPPER

Peperomia argyreia

TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 20 x 20cm (8 x 8in)

Held on slim red stalks, the striped silver and dark green foliage of this elegant plant looks like the skin of a watermelon, and it makes a beautiful focal point in the centre of a table. Despite its glamorous looks, it is quite easy to care for and remains compact.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings from spring to autumn, and keep it almost dry over winter. Set on a tray of damp pebbles, or mist the leaves every few days.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in soil-based potting compost in a 10–12.5cm (4–5in) pot. Set in light shade in summer, and a bright area in winter when light levels are lower, but out of direct sun. Replenish the top of the compost annually. Repot every 3 years, as it prefers to be root-bound.

RADIATOR PLANT

Peperomia caperata

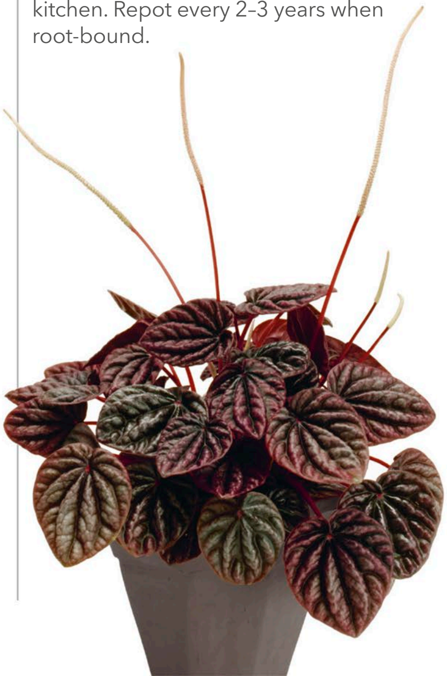
TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate to high
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 25 x 25cm (10 x 10in)

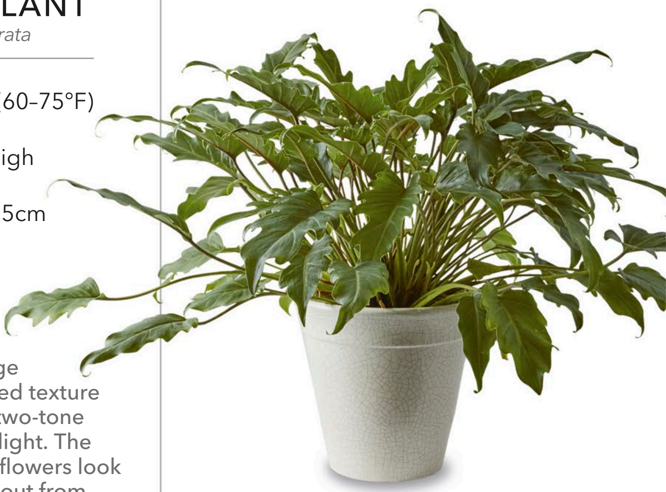
Also known as the emerald ripple plant, this peperomia's heart-shaped red or green foliage has an intricately corrugated texture that produces a beautiful two-tone effect when it catches the light. The long, thin, cream summer flowers look like candlewicks shooting out from the foliage.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings from spring to autumn. Keep the compost almost dry over winter. Set on a tray of damp pebbles, but do not mist the foliage.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in soil-based compost mixed with a handful of perlite in a small 10cm (4in) pot. Set in a lightly shaded area with high humidity, such as a bathroom or kitchen. Repot every 2–3 years when root-bound.





XANADU PHILODENDRON

Philodendron xanadu

TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Light shade/Shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 1 x 1.2m (3 x 4ft)
WARNING! All parts are poisonous

The bold, lobed foliage of this leafy philodendron will add a touch of class to a shady corner or hallway where a bulky plant is needed. Its fountain of glossy, dark green leaves, which can grow up to 45cm (18in) in length, forms a compact dome.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn; allow the top to dry out between waterings in winter. Mist the leaves every few days or set on a tray of damp pebbles.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer monthly from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in soil-based compost in a large pot that will fit the root ball. Keep away from direct sun. Wipe the surface of the leaves with a damp cloth every few weeks to remove dust and keep the plant looking its best. Repot every 2–3 years or when root-bound.

ALUMINIUM PLANT

Pilea cadierei AGM

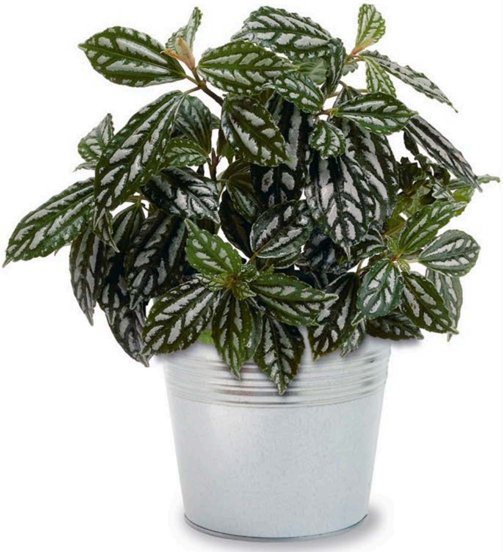
TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 30 x 25cm (12 x 10in)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

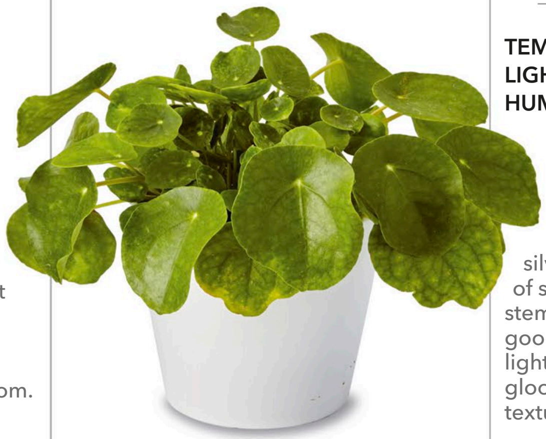
The lacy, aluminium-silver markings on the foliage of this pretty little plant give it its name, while an easy-going nature make it a good choice for beginners. Use it to add sparkle to a leafy collection in a lightly shaded room.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn; allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings in winter. Mist regularly.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Use a 2:1 mix of soil-based compost and perlite and plant in a 12.5–15cm (5–6in) pot. Stand in little shade, out of direct sunlight and keep the plant warm year-round. Pinch out the flower buds on the stem tips to keep the plant bushy. Repot every year or two when root-bound.





MISSIONARY PLANT

Pilea peperomioides AGM

TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 30 x 30cm (12 x 12in)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

Balanced on the stems like spinning plates, the round leaves of this unusual plant create an intriguing display, elevating it to the top of many plant collectors' wish lists. The loose dome of leaves looks great on a windowsill or table in a lightly shaded spot.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings from spring to autumn; keep it just moist in winter. Mist the foliage regularly.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a 2:1 mix of soil-based compost and perlite in a 12.5–15cm (5–6in) pot. Stand in light shade, out of direct sun and away from draughts. Keep the plant warm all year round, and repot every 1–2 years in spring when it is root-bound.

BRAZILIAN COLEUS

Plectranthus oertendahlii AGM

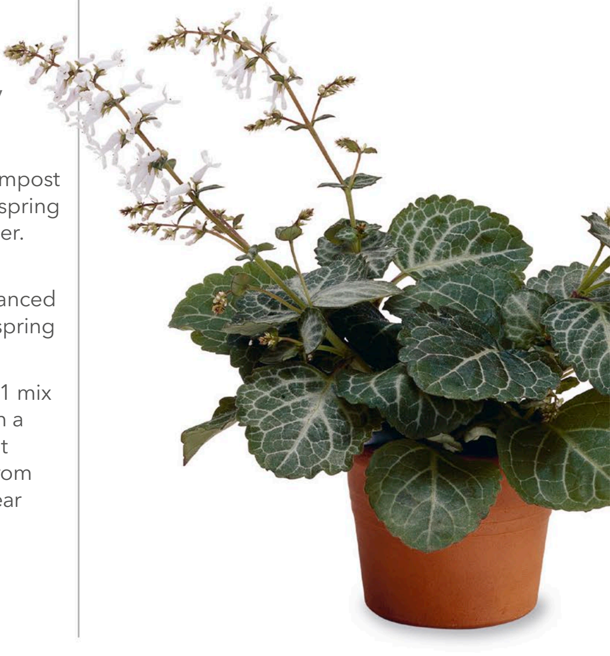
TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Light shade/Shade
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 20 x 60cm (8 x 24in)

Grown for its handsome, rough, silver-veined foliage and spires of small white spring flowers, the lax stems of this easy-care plant make it a good choice for a tall pot. It thrives in light shade, but will also grow happily in gloomier positions, adding colour and texture to rooms without any direct sun.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings from spring to autumn. In winter, keep the compost just moist.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Use a 2:1 mix of soil-based compost and perlite and plant in a 12.5–15cm (5–6in) pot. Set in light shade, out of direct sun. Repot every 2–3 years when root-bound.



CHINA DOLL PLANT

Radermachera sinica AGM

TEMPERATURE 12–24°C (54–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low to moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 1.8 x 1.2m (4 x 6ft)

This handsome plant will fill an empty corner in a bright room with its elegant leafy stems. The glossy foliage is rich green in colour and divided up into small leaflets, which lend this tree-like plant a light, airy look.

WATERING From spring to early autumn, water when the top of the compost feels dry. Reduce watering in winter so the compost is just moist. Mist occasionally.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in soil-based compost in a pot that will accommodate the root ball. Stand in bright filtered light, out of direct sun. Prune in spring to keep it to size, and pinch out stem tips. Repot this fast-growing plant every 2 years.

AFRICAN SPEAR

Sansevieria cylindrica

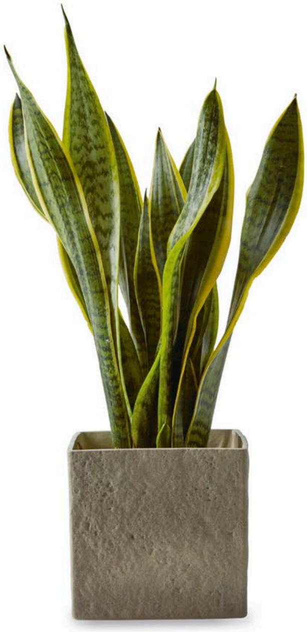
TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 75 x 30cm (30 x 12in)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

Like its cousin the snake plant, the African spear will also help to purify the air, and it is equally easy to care for. Its tall, slim, cylindrical leaves look like javelins, and the grey-green banding on the leaves adds to the decorative effect. Position the plant where the brittle foliage will not get broken off.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings from spring to autumn; water once a month in winter.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Use a cactus compost and plant in a pot that will only just fit the roots; it likes to be cramped. Set out of direct sun; it tolerates some shade, but the spears may stretch to the light. Repot only when tightly root-bound.



VARIEGATED SNAKE PLANT

Sansevieria trifasciata var. *laurentii* AGM

TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Light shade
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 75 x 30cm (30 x 12in)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

One of the best plants for purifying the air, the snake plant – or mother-in-law's tongue as it is also known – produces a tight cluster of green and silver sword-like foliage with a yellow trim. Thriving on neglect (overwatering will rot it), this plant is almost bullet-proof.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings from spring to autumn; water once a month in winter.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Use a cactus compost and plant in a pot that will just accommodate the roots – it likes a snug fit. Set in light shade, out of direct sun. Repot only when tightly root-bound.

DWARF UMBRELLA TREE

Schefflera arboricola AGM

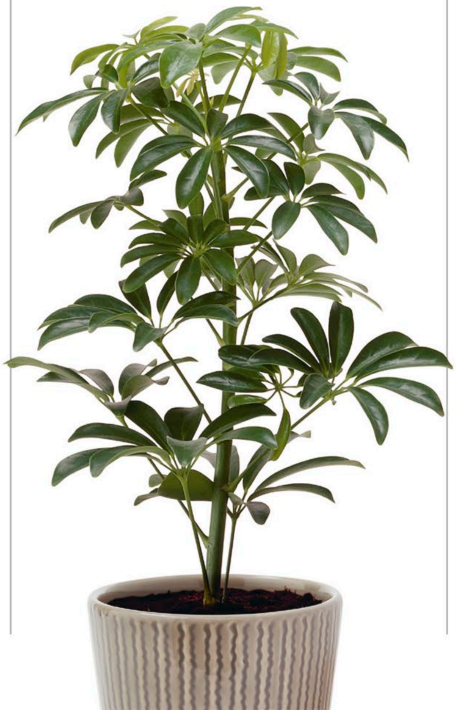
TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Low to moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 2.4 x 1.2m (8 x 4ft)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

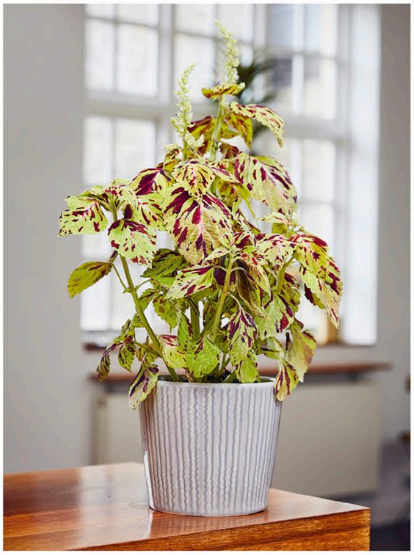
This impressive plant is loved for its hand-shaped green or variegated leaves and its ability to grow in centrally heated homes in sun or shade. Plants are often sold with their stems tied to a mossy pole.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings from spring to autumn; water once a month in winter.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every month from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a heavy pot that will fit the root ball, in 2:1 mix of soil-based compost and sand. Keep out of direct sun in a warm room. Prune in spring, and repot every 2 years.





COLEUS

Solenostemon scutellarioides hybrids

TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 30cm (24 x 12in)
WARNING! All parts toxic to pets

With a huge choice of leaf shapes and colours – from lime green and lipstick pink to brooding burgundy, burnt orange, and everything in between – there is a coleus to suit any design scheme. The fancy foliage makes a great partner for plain-leaved plants, or use some of the muted colours as foils for flowers.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to autumn; allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings in winter.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in an equal mix of multipurpose and soil-based composts in a 15cm (6in) pot. Pinch out the stem tips to keep it bushy. Set in a bright position, out of direct sunlight. Prune the stems back by two-thirds in late winter or early spring, or grow from seed every spring (see pp208–09).

STROMANTHE

Stromanthe sanguinea 'Triostar'

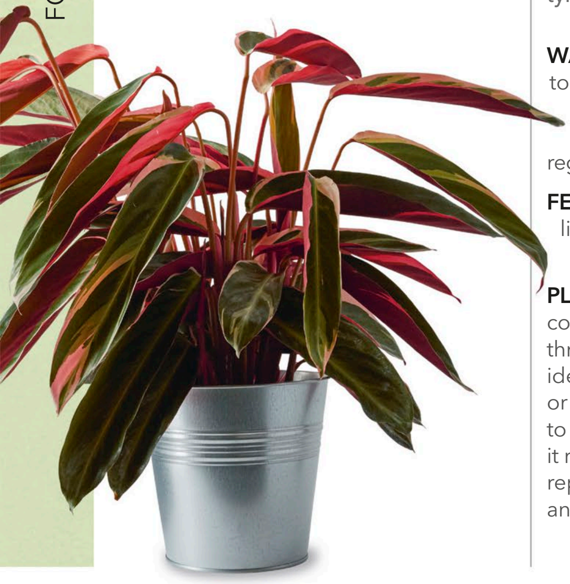
TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY High
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 45 x 60cm (18 x 24in)

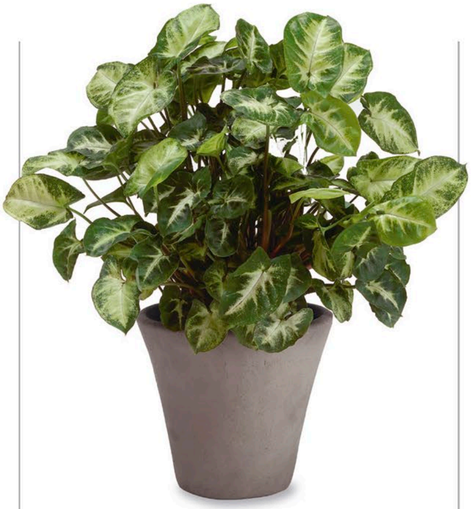
A jewel among foliage plants, few can compete with the stromanthe's striking leaves, splashed with shades of pink, red, green, and cream. It needs space to show off its spreading, spear-shaped foliage, and is best displayed in a plain container that complements, but does not compete with, its dazzling hues.

WATERING Keep the compost moist from spring to summer, and water less frequently in winter. Mist daily, and set on a tray of damp pebbles, or install a room humidifier.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to late autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in an equal mix of multipurpose and soil-based composts in a 12.5–15cm (5–6in) pot – shallow containers are ideal. Stand the plant in a bright spot, out of direct sun and draughts, ideally in a kitchen or bathroom. Repot every 2–3 years.





GOOSEFOOT PLANT

Syngonium podophyllum AGM

TEMPERATURE 15–29 °C (60–85°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 90 x 60cm (3 x 2ft)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

The arrow-shaped, cream, and green variegated foliage of the goosefoot plant will add a jungly note to a foliage display in a bright or lightly shaded room. It is usually sold as a compact foliage plant, but, if left to its own devices, it will grow tall and may need tying onto a support if it starts to climb.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings from spring to late autumn; reduce watering slightly in winter. Mist leaves regularly or set on a tray of damp pebbles.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in soil-based compost in a 15–20cm (6–8in) pot. It will thrive in a bright spot out of direct sun, ideally in a humid area, such as a kitchen or bathroom. Prune every year in spring to keep it compact and bushy, and when it reaches an ideal size, do not repot, but replace the top layer of the compost annually in spring.

BOAT LILY

Tradescantia spathacea

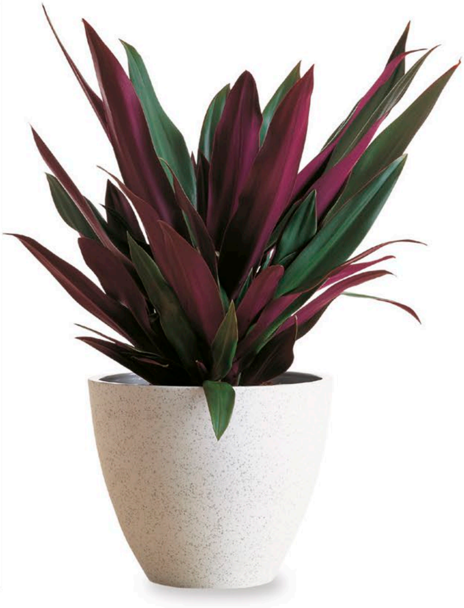
TEMPERATURE 15–27°C (60–80°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 60cm (24 x 24in)

The boat lily's green and purple sword-shaped leaves make an eye-catching bouquet. Small, white flowers appear throughout the year, nestled between the leaves, but the star attraction is the foliage. This compact plant will thrive in the humidity in a small bathroom or kitchen.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings from spring to autumn; keep it just moist in winter. Mist every day or two, or set on a tray of damp pebbles.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a 2:1 mix of soil-based compost and sand or perlite in a 15–20cm (6–8in) pot. Set in a bright spot, out of direct sun it tolerates some shade, but may lose its purple tones. Repot every 2–3 years.



SPINELESS YUCCA

Yucca elephantipes AGM

TEMPERATURE 10–27°C (50–80°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 1.5 x 0.75m (5 x 2ft 6in)
WARNING! All parts toxic to pets

One of the few plants that will bask happily in full summer sun, this yucca's spiky, sword-like foliage grows froma palm-like trunk, forming a dramatic sculptural shape that makes a bold statement in a sunny room.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings from spring to autumn; water once a month in winter.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a 2:1 mix of soil-based and sand in a pot that fits the root ball. If it grows too big, cut the trunk to size in spring; new foliage will soon appear. Repot every 2–3 years.

FERN ARUM

Zamioculcas zamiifolia

TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 75 x 60cm (30 x 24in)
WARNING! All parts are toxic

The long, leafy stems of the fern arum form a large, vase-shaped plant that will grow almost anywhere, as it tolerates both sun and shade, and low levels of humidity. Perfect for beginners, the glossy foliage makes a good foil for more glamorous leaves and flowers.

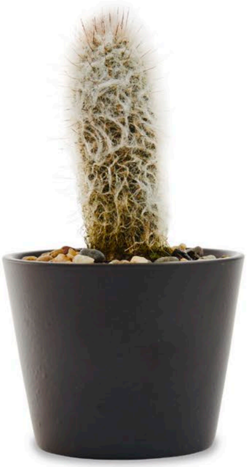
WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings from spring to autumn; water once a month in winter.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a 2:1 mix of soil-based compost and sand in a pot that fits the root ball. Light shade or filtered sun is ideal, but it will also grow in gloomier spots. Trim in spring to create a good shape. Repot every 2–3 years.

CACTI

From the spiky and wonderfully weird, to elegant trailers with smooth stems, cacti are technically succulents, but are usually considered to belong in their own distinct category. Many are perfect for a sunny windowsill display or simple hanging basket, and their ability to store water in their leaves and stems, allowing them to survive extended periods of drought, makes them ideal for beginners. Not all are desert dwellers, and a few, including the Christmas cactus (see p165), live naturally on trees in tropical forests and require shadier conditions and humidity.



OLD MAN CACTUS

Cephalocereus senilis

TEMPERATURE 10–32°C (50–90°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun in summer
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 30 x 10cm (12 x 4in)

Covered in fine white hairs that resemble an old man's beard, this cactus' weird appearance is guaranteed to create a talking point. The tall, unbranched columnar stems grow in clusters, and the silvery hairs are most prevalent on young plants. The cactus' red, yellow, or white flowers rarely appear.

WATERING Allow the top 1–2cm (½–¾in) of compost to dry out completely between waterings. In winter, reduce watering to once or twice during the season.

FEEDING Apply a fertilizer for cacti once a month in spring and summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Wearing protective gloves, plant in a small 10cm (4in) pot in cactus compost (or in an equal mix of soil-based compost, sand, and perlite). Set in sun, but move to a cool but bright room (unheated if possible) in winter. Repot young plants annually in spring, and mature cacti every 2 years.

PERUVIAN APPLE CACTUS

Cereus forbesii

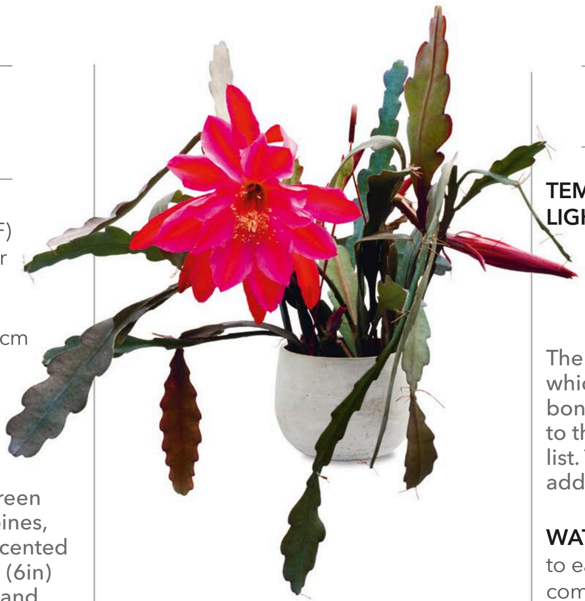
TEMPERATURE 10–32°C (50–90°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun in summer
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 90 x 15cm (36 x 6in)

This plant's classic cactus shape and form makes it a great addition to a collection, creating height and structure at the back of a display. The grey-green stems are covered with brown spines, and in summer they bear large, scented white or pink flowers up to 15cm (6in) in diameter, which open at night and close at dawn.

WATERING Water when the top 1cm (½in) of compost is dry. Water once or twice in winter when the plant is dormant.

FEEDING Apply a cactus fertilizer once a month in summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Wearing protective gloves, plant in a heavy 15–20cm (6–8in) pot to prevent the plant toppling over, in cactus compost (or an equal mix of soil-based sand, compost, and perlite). Set in the sun, but move to a cool, bright room in winter. Repot young plants annually, and then every 2 years.



ORCHID CACTUS

Disocactus flagelliformis AGM

TEMPERATURE 4–24°C (40–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 60cm (24 x 24in)

With its flat, thin, scallop-edged stems, this tropical cactus is ideal for a hanging basket in a bright room. In spring, the plant's large, red, funnel-shaped flowers are the real stars of the show.

WATERING Water regularly from spring to early autumn, allowing the top of the compost dry out between waterings. Keep plants just moist in winter. Mist occasionally with distilled or rainwater during hot summers.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength, high potash fertilizer once every two weeks from spring to summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a 10cm (4in) pot or basket in epiphytic cactus compost (or a mix of 4:1 mix of soil-based compost and sharp sand). Ideally, keep this cactus in filtered sun and between 16–24°C (60–75°F) in the day and 4–12°C (40–55°F) at night from spring to autumn. In winter, move it to a shady cool room, bringing it back into a lighter position in spring. Plants flower best when root-bound, so do not repot.

FISHBONE CACTUS

Epiphyllum anguliger

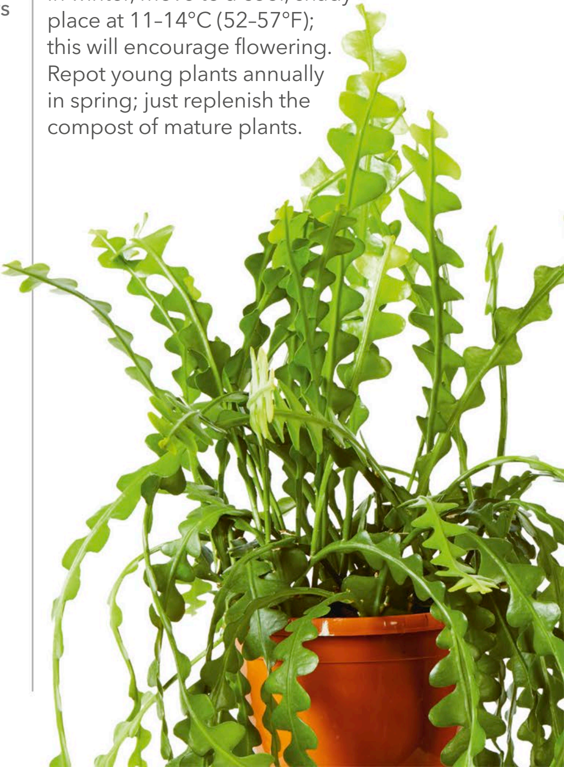
TEMPERATURE 11–25°C (52–77°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun/Light shade
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 60cm (24 x 24in)

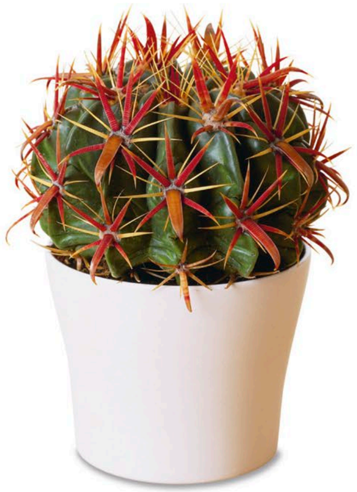
The mound of wavy-edged leaves, which dangle from the plant like fat fish bones, have pushed this unusual plant to the top of many a cactus-lover's wish list. The fragrant, pale yellow flowers add to its charms in autumn.

WATERING Water regularly from spring to early autumn, allowing the top of the compost dry out between waterings. Keep plants just moist in winter. Mist daily or stand on a tray of damp pebbles.

FEEDING In summer, when the flower buds form, apply a high potash fertilizer every 2 weeks until the blooms open.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant this cactus in a 10–15cm (4–6in) pot or basket in epiphytic cactus compost (or a mix of 4:1 mix of soil-based compost and sharp sand). Keep the plant at 16–25°C (61–77°F) from spring to autumn. In winter, move to a cool, shady place at 11–14°C (52–57°F); this will encourage flowering. Repot young plants annually in spring; just replenish the compost of mature plants.





DEVIL'S TONGUE

Ferocactus latispinus AGM

TEMPERATURE 10–30°C (50–86°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun in summer
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 25 x 25cm (10 x 10in)

This spiky barrel-shaped cactus has great stage presence. The plump round stem is covered with thick, red, hooked spines, which give the plant its name, and needle-like cream spines that combine to form a ball of colourful spikes. Purple or yellow flowers appear in late summer on mature plants.

WATERING Allow the top 2cm (¾in) of compost to dry out between waterings from spring to autumn. Water just once or twice in winter.

FEEDING Apply a cactus fertilizer every 3–4 weeks from spring to late summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Wearing protective gloves, plant in a pot large enough to stabilize the cactus. Plant in cactus compost (or a mix of 3:1:1 mix of soil-based compost, sand, and perlite). Set on a sunny windowsill, moving the plant away from the window a little in midsummer. In winter, move to a cool, bright, unheated room. Repot young plants annually, and mature plants every 2 years.

PINCUSHION CACTUS

Mammillaria species

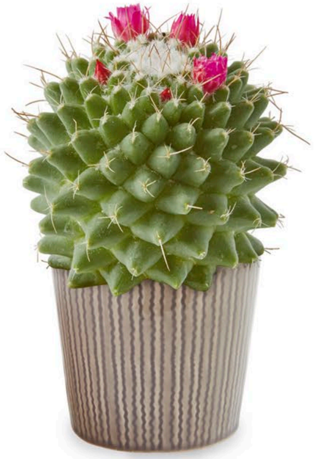
TEMPERATURE 7–30°C (45–86°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun in summer
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 15 x 30cm (6 x 8in) for most species

These diminutive cacti are popular house plants, with most fitting neatly on a sunny windowsill and flowering regularly in summer. They are round or form short columns, and have tiny spines along ridges or on top of the little bumps that cover the surface of most of these cacti. Pink, purple, orange, or cream flowers form a ring at the top of the plant in summer.

WATERING Allow the top 2cm (¾in) of compost to dry out between waterings from spring to autumn. Water just once or twice in winter when the plant is dormant.

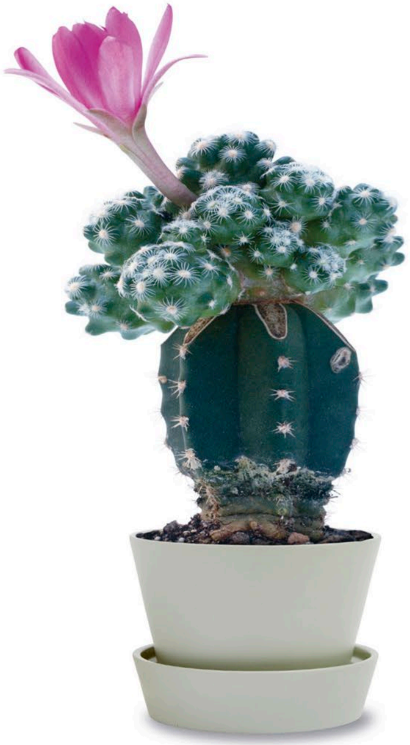
FEEDING Apply with a cactus fertilizer every 3–4 weeks from mid-spring to late summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Wearing protective gloves, plant in a small 7.5–10cm (3–4in) pot in cactus compost (or a mix of 3:1:1 mix of soil-based compost, sand, and perlite). Set on a sunny windowsill, but move the cactus away from the window in midsummer. In winter, set it a cool, bright, unheated room with low humidity. Repot young plants annually, and mature plants every 2 years.



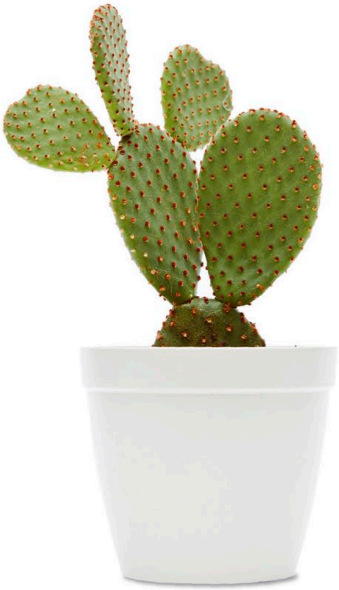
Mammillaria polythele f. *nuda*

Small and columnar, this little cactus has the typical knobbly appearance of most pincushion cacti. Its pink flowers appear over a long period from spring to summer.



Mammillaria saboae subsp. *haudeana*

This unusual variety produces small round stems from a larger central ribbed stem. The pink flowers appear in summer like shooting stars.



BUNNY EARS CACTUS

Opuntia microdasys AGM

TEMPERATURE 10–30°C (50–86°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun in summer
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 30 x 45cm (12 x 18in)

This pretty cactus produces oval-shaped, flattened green stems dotted with clusters of tiny bristle-like spines ("glochids") that grow in pairs to resemble rabbits' ears. In summer, yellow bowl-shaped flowers appear.

WATERING Water weekly from spring to early autumn, allowing the compost to dry out between waterings. Water once or twice in winter when dormant.

FEEDING Apply a cactus fertilizer every 6–8 weeks from spring to early autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Wearing gloves, plant in a pot that will not restrict the cactus' roots, and use a cactus compost (or a mix of 3:1:1 mix of soil-based compost, sand, and perlite). Stand in a bright spot away from direct sun in summer, and in a cool room in winter. Repot young plants annually, and mature plants every 2 years.

GOLDEN BALL CACTUS

Parodia leninghausii AGM

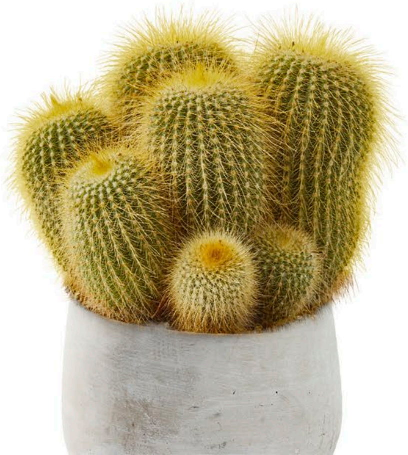
TEMPERATURE 10–30°C (50–86°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun in summer
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 45 x 15cm (18 x 6in)

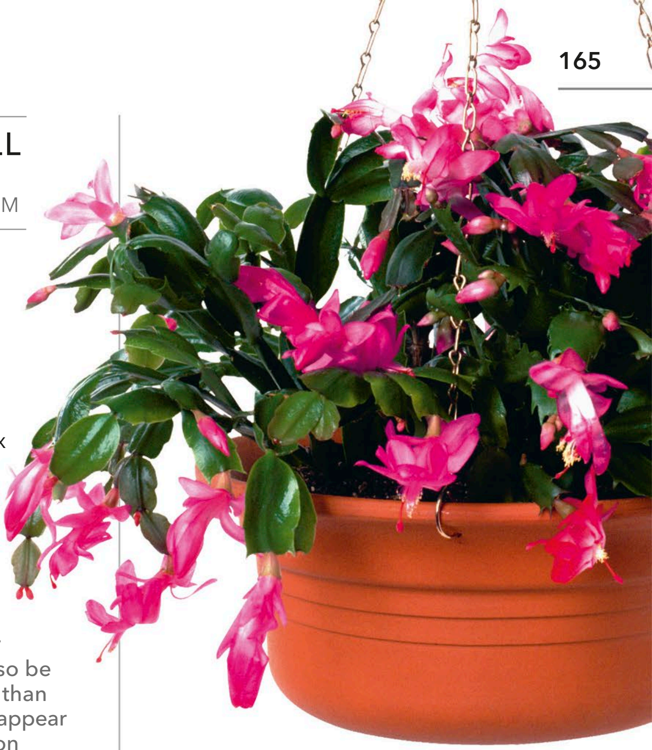
This plant creates a mini desert scene with its clusters of compact prickly stems. Its common name can be confusing because mature plants have a columnar rather than ball shape, and it may also be labelled as *Notocactus* rather than *Parodia*. Bright yellow flowers appear on a woolly crown in summer on mature plants.

WATERING Water from spring to autumn only when the top 2cm (¾in) of compost has dried out. Water just once or twice in winter when the plant is dormant.

FEEDING Apply a cactus fertilizer every 6–8 weeks from spring to late summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Wearing protective gloves, plant in a 7.5–15cm (3–6in) pot, depending on the size of the cactus. Add a layer of grit to the pot and top up with cactus compost (or a mix of 3:1:1 mix of soil-based compost, sand, and perlite). Place in sun but keep out of direct sun in summer. Move to a bright but cool room in winter. Repot young plants annually, and then every 2 years.





CHRISTMAS CACTUS

Schlumbergera × bridgesii

TEMPERATURE 12–27°C (54–80°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Moderate
CARE Fairly easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 45 x 45cm (18 x 18in)

Prized for its bright pink flowers, which open up at Christmas time, this tropical cactus also produces flat, segmented trailing stems all year round.

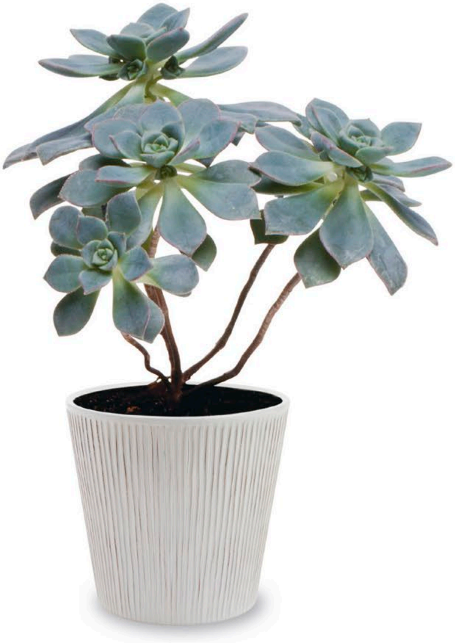
WATERING Keep the compost moist, but not wet. Reduce watering for a few weeks after flowering in late winter when the plant rests, and again from mid-autumn until buds develop in early winter. Mist daily with distilled or rainwater, or place on a saucer of damp pebbles.

FEEDING Apply a balanced liquid feed monthly from mid-spring to early autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a small pot in cactus compost (or a 3:1:1 mix of soil-based compost, leafmould, and grit). After flowering, move to a cool room; then increase the temperature, and water and feed it during the growing seasons. Repot in early spring.

SUCCULENTS

These drought-lovers are grown mainly for their striking foliage, which comes in all shapes and sizes, from tall and spiky to small, round, and velvety. The flowers, if they appear, are often a surprise, their bright colours providing a vivid contrast to the fleshy leaves. Succulents are easy to grow, and because their foliage acts as the perfect water-storage unit, they can suffer long periods of neglect. Just give them a sunny position and water them very occasionally to keep them happy.



PINWHEEL

Aeonium haworthii AGM

TEMPERATURE 10–24°C (50–75°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 60 x 45cm (24 x 18in)

This sculptural succulent adds height and character to a mixed display on a windowsill. The branched stems are topped with rosettes of grey-green fleshy leaves, and in late spring, small pale yellow or pink-tinged flowers rise up above the foliage. Look out for variegated types, too, which feature yellow and pink-edged leaves.

WATERING Water from autumn to spring when the top of the compost feels dry; keep the soil almost dry in summer, when the plant may go dormant in hot periods.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from winter to late spring.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a 15cm (6in) pot in cactus compost. Display in bright, filtered light, out of direct sun in summer. After flowering, the leafy rosette will die, but new stems will grow to replace it. Repot every 2–3 years in spring.

BLACK AEONIUM

Aeonium 'Zwartkop' AGM

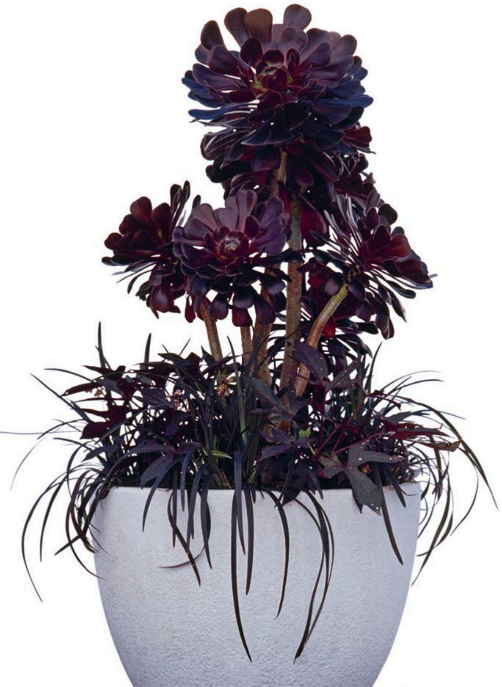
TEMPERATURE 10–24°C (50–75°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 60 x 60cm (2 x 2ft)

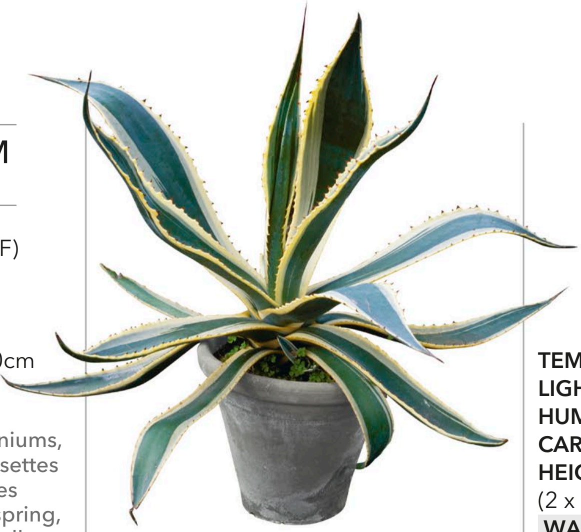
One of the most sought-after aeoniums, this statuesque variety features rosettes of dark purple, almost black, leaves on tall, branching stems. In early spring, mature plants bear small, starry, yellow flowers. Grow it as a house plant all year round, or on a patio outside in summer.

WATERING Water from autumn to spring when the top of the compost feels dry; keep the soil almost dry in summer when it may go dormant in hot weather.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from winter to late spring.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in cactus compost in a 15cm (6in) pot. Set in bright light, out of direct summer sun. The leafy rosette will die after flowering, but new plants will grow to replace the old one. Repot every 2–3 years in spring.





AMERICAN ALOE

Agave americana AGM

TEMPERATURE 10–30°C (50–86°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 90 x 90cm (3 x 3ft)
WARNING! The sap is toxic

In arid areas, this spiky plant grows into a huge, impressive plant, gracing parks and landscapes with its spiny blue leaves, each sporting a white stripe down the centre. Grown indoors in a pot, it will remain more compact, but can still form a large plant, so give its spreading leaves space to shine.

WATERING Water from autumn to spring when the top of the compost feels dry; keep almost dry through winter.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid every 2 weeks from early spring to early autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in cactus compost in a pot that will just fit the root ball. Stand in full sun or bright filtered light. Repot every 1–2 years, wearing gloves to protect your hands. To keep it compact, remove the plant from its pot and trim the roots, then repot it with replenished compost in the either the same sized pot or one a size larger.

QUEEN VICTORIA CENTURY PLANT

Agave victoriae-reginae AGM

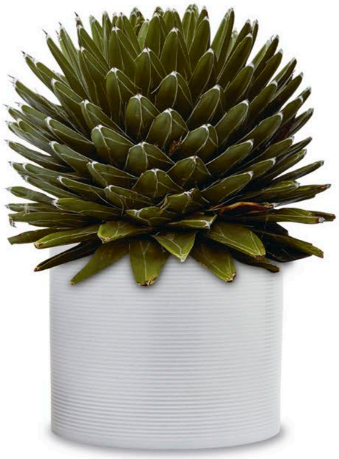
TEMPERATURE -5–30°C (23-86°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 60 x 60cm (2 x 2ft)
WARNING! The sap is toxic

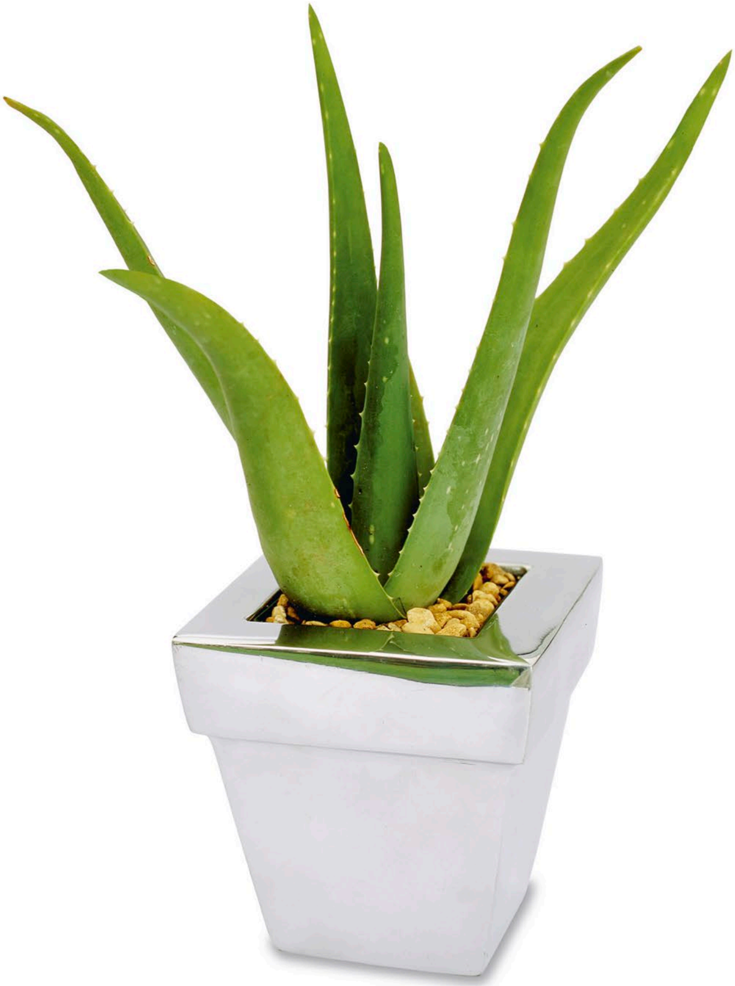
The thick, triangular leaves of this agave have white edges and black tips, which you only notice on close inspection, so display where these details can be admired. An easy-care succulent, its textural dome of leaves makes a great partner for echeverias, aeoniums and houseleeks (*Sempervivum*).

WATERING Water from autumn to spring when the top of the compost feels dry; in winter, allow the compost to dry out, watering just once or twice.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer 2–3 times during the growing period from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in cactus compost in a pot that just fits the root ball. Stand in full sun or bright filtered light on a deep windowsill. Repot every 2–3 years or when root-bound.





BARBADOS ALOE

Aloe vera AGM

TEMPERATURE 10–27°C (50–80°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 60 x 60cm (2 x 2ft)

Some people grow this architectural aloe for its handsome, spiky green leaves, but its benefits go far beyond aesthetic appeal. One of the best plants for purifying the air, the sap from aloe leaves can also be used to soothe burns, including sunburn.

WATERING From spring to autumn, allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings. In winter, keep the compost almost dry.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer 2–3 times during the growing period from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in cactus compost in a pot that just fits the root ball. Stand in bright filtered light, out of direct sun in summer. Repot every 2–3 years in spring, and pot up baby offsets that appear next to the parent plant.

JADE PLANT

Crassula ovata AGM

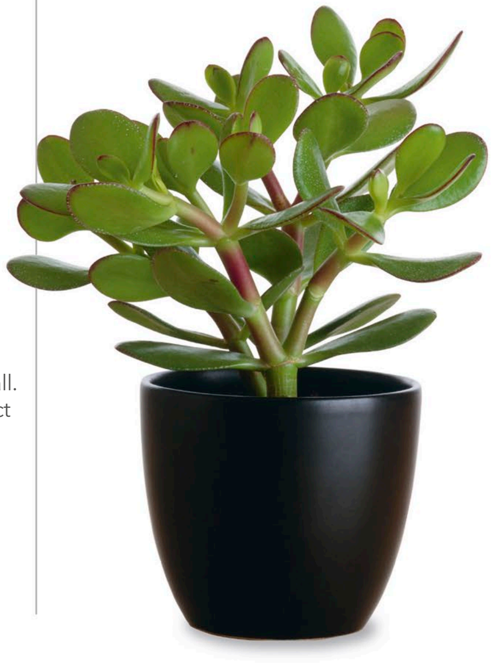
TEMPERATURE 15–25°C (60–77°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 90 x 90cm (3 x 3ft)
WARNING! The sap is toxic

Sometimes known as a money tree, due its association with wealth and prosperity in some Asian cultures, this plant is also renowned for being almost indestructible, soldiering on through extended periods of neglect. Mature plants look like beautiful bonsai trees, with their thick, branched stems and fleshy, oval-shaped, red-edged leaves.

WATERING From spring to autumn, allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings. In winter, water just enough to prevent the leaves shrivelling.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer 2–3 times during the growing period from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Wearing gloves, plant in a 15–20cm (6–8in) pot in a 3:1 mix of soil-based compost and sharp sand. Repot every 2–3 years in spring.



ECHEVERIA

Echeveria species

TEMPERATURE 10–30°C (50–86°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 10 x 30cm (4 x 12in)

Like tiny water lilies, these beautiful little succulents form tight rosettes of spoon-shaped, blue-green, red, purple, or variegated leaves. Line up a few with different colours and forms (there are hundreds to choose from) on a sunny windowsill, or include them as part of a group of contrasting succulents. If grown in sufficient light, mature plants produce tall pink or yellow stems that rise up from the centre of the rosette, topped with lantern-shaped flowers.

WATERING From spring to autumn, allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings; do not water in winter when dormant.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer 2–3 times during the growing period from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow echeverias in a 10–20cm (4–8in) pot in a 3:1 mix of soil-based compost and sharp sand. Stand in bright filtered light, out of direct sun in summer, and in a cool, sunny area in winter when dormant. Repot every 2–3 years in spring or when root-bound. Baby plantlets often appear beside the parent plant, and can be left as they are to increase the size of the group, or potted on separately in a container of their own.

Echeveria agavoides 'Taurus'

Also sold as 'Red Taurus', this beautiful form produces a dark, burgundy-red leaf rosette and in summer, red and yellow flowers appear on tall stems.

Echeveria elegans AGM

One of the most popular echeverias, this elegant species has blue-green leaves with burgundy edges, and, in summer, it produces long pink stems topped with pink and yellow flowers.

Echeveria secunda var. *glauca*

This handsome species has pale blue-grey leaves, flatter than most echeverias, which form a beautiful textural rosette. Long yellow stems of dainty red and yellow flowers appear in summer.

TENDER EUPHORBIA

Euphorbia species

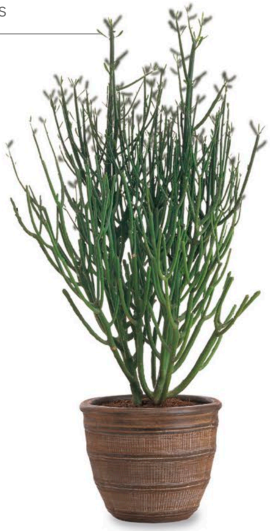
TEMPERATURE 10–30°C (50–86°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 90 x 60cm (3 x 2ft)
WARNING! The sap is toxic

To define the group of plants known as euphorbias is impossible, as it includes a vast number of disparate species of various sizes and shapes. Those grown as house plants include the stocky African milk tree and many cactus-like plants, including the weird, leafless pencil cactus. These plants thrive in sun and tolerate periods of drought.

WATERING Water from spring to autumn, allowing the top of the compost to dry out between waterings; in winter, keep the compost almost dry.

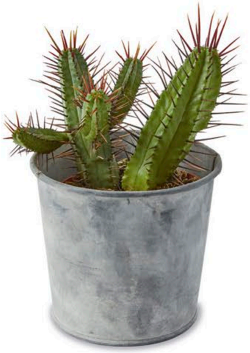
FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a pot that fits the root ball in cactus compost (or a 2:1 mix of soil-based compost and horticultural grit). Set in full sun. Wear gloves when handling plants – the sap is a skin irritant. Repot every 2–3 years.



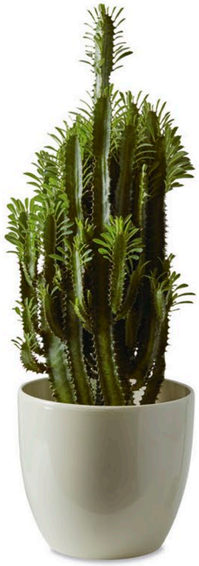
Euphorbia tirucalli

The pencil cactus looks like a deciduous shrub in winter. Its small foliage soon drops off to reveal a gaunt silhouette of smooth, tactile stems.



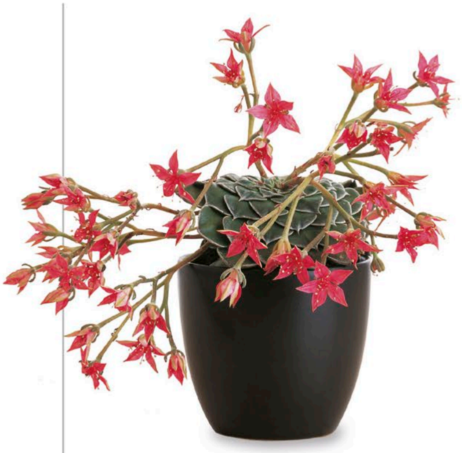
Euphorbia enopla

Disguised as a cactus, the pincushion euphorbia plant produces ribbed grey-green branched stems up to 30cm (12in) in height, covered in red spines.



Euphorbia trigona

The African milk tree's impressive, spiny, dark green stems mimic those of a cactus. The finger-like leaves which sprout from them add to its appeal.



CHIHUAHUA FLOWER

Graptopetalum bellum AGM

TEMPERATURE 10–27°C (50–80°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 15 x 10cm (6 x 4in)

This little plant's tight rosette of white-rimmed, grey leaves might not look like much to write home about, but that all changes when its showy flowers make their appearance. The starry pink blooms, which are said to resemble little dogs' faces, shoot out from the centre of the rosette on long, branched stems like tiny fireworks. Group a few together on a sunny shelf to intensify the effect.

WATERING Water from spring to autumn, allowing the top of the compost to dry out between waterings; in winter, water just enough to prevent the compost from completely drying out.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer 2–3 times during the growing period from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a small 10–12.5cm (4–5in) pot in cactus compost (or a 2:1 mix of soil-based compost and horticultural grit). Stand in full sun, or bright filtered light close to a window. This plant grows slowly and will only need repotting every 3 years when root-bound.

HAWORTHIA

Haworthia attenuata 'Striata'

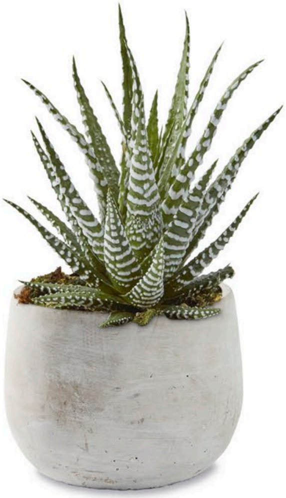
TEMPERATURE 12–26°C (54–79°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD Up to 20 x 15cm (8 x 6in)

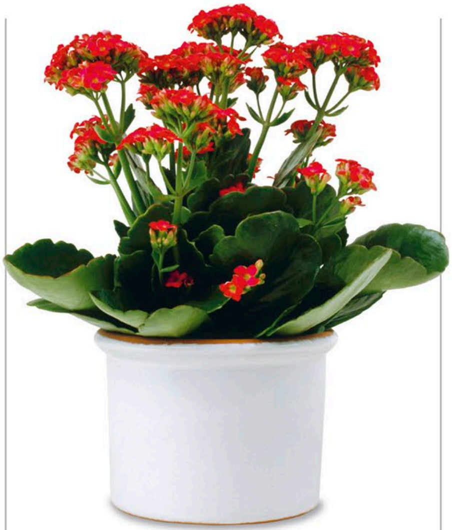
The spiky stems of this succulent make a striking contrast with more rounded succulents as part of a windowsill display. Some sport white raised stripes or spotty reddish bumps, which add to haworthia's rich texture, while slender stems of long tubular white flowers may appear on mature plants in the summer.

WATERING From spring to autumn, allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings. In winter, water sparingly, just preventing the compost from completely drying out.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a small 7.5–10cm (3–4in) pot in cactus compost (or a 2:1 mix of soil-based potting compost and horticultural grit). Set in full sun or filtered light, on or close to a windowsill. Repot every 2–3 years in spring, but only when root-bound.





FLAMING KATY

Kalanchoe blossfeldiana AGM

TEMPERATURE 12–26°C (54–80°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 45 x 30cm (18 x 12in)
WARNING! All parts toxic to pets

Flaming Katy's heads of bright flowers appear in spring and summer, creating a show of colour against the round, fleshy green leaves. The red, pink, or white blooms often last up to 12 weeks, but plants are reluctant to reflower, so you may need to replace them each year.

WATERING From spring to summer, water from the bottom when the top of the compost feels dry, ensuring no water falls in between the leaves, as this can cause rot. Keep the compost almost dry through autumn and winter.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks from spring to summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a 10–15cm (4–6in) pot in cactus compost (or a 2:1 mix of soil-based potting compost and horticultural grit). Cut the flower stems down after blooming. Repot every year in a container one size larger, or buy new plants annually.

FLOWER DUST PLANT

Kalanchoe pumila AGM

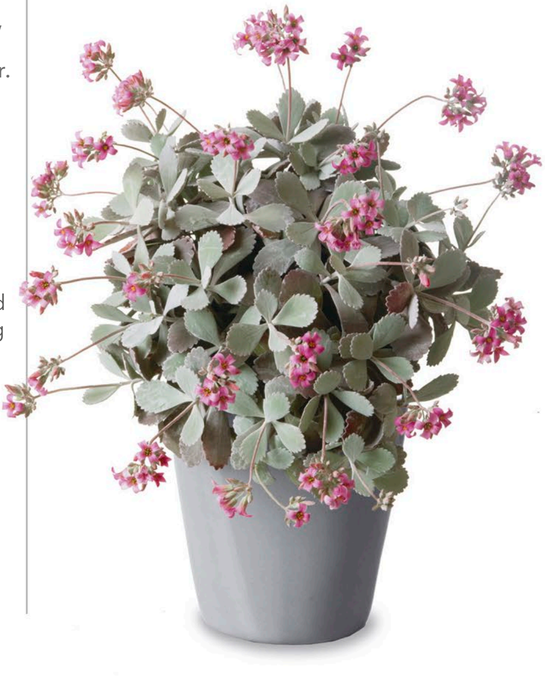
TEMPERATURE 10–27°C (50–80°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 45 x 45cm (18 x 18in)
WARNING! All parts toxic to pets

There are many types of *Kalanchoe*, but if you have space for only one, this should be at the top of your list. The powdery-white leaves have serrated edges that look like they have been cut with pinking shears, and in summer it bursts into bloom, bearing clusters of small, starry pink flowers on slim stems.

WATERING From spring to summer, water from the bottom when the top of the compost feels dry; keep the compost almost dry through autumn and winter.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every month from spring to late summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in 10–20cm (4–8in) pot in cactus compost (or a 2:1 mix of soil-based potting compost and horticultural grit). Stand in full sun, and in a room with good ventilation. Repot every 2–3 years in spring when root-bound.



PANDA PLANT

Kalanchoe tomentosa AGM

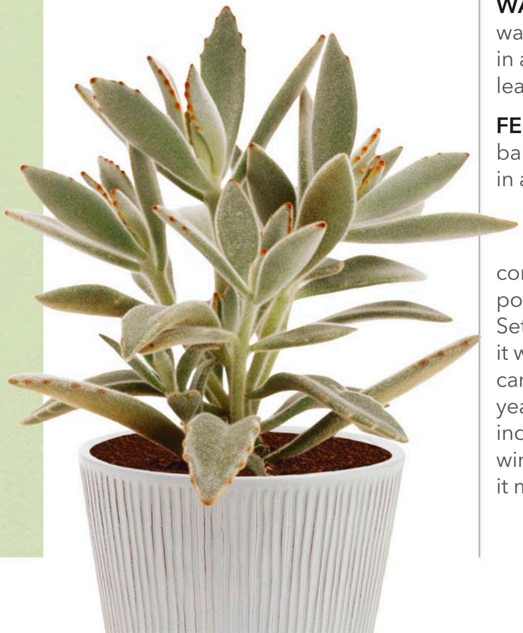
TEMPERATURE 15–23°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD up to 60 x 60cm (2 x 2ft)
WARNING! All parts toxic to pets

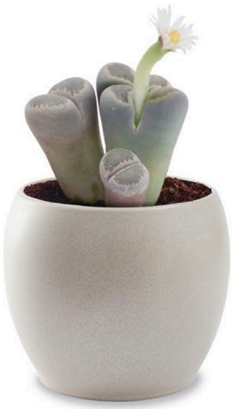
The grey, velvety leaves, with brown spots along the edges, give this curious succulent a tactile quality and its name. Grown for its foliage, it can form quite a large plant with a tree-like silhouette, but it is unlikely to flower indoors.

WATERING From spring to summer, water from the bottom when the top of the compost feels dry, ensuring the leaves do not get wet. Keep the compost almost dry through autumn and winter.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer every month from spring to late summer.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in cactus compost (or a 2:1 mix of soil-based potting compost and horticultural grit) in a 10–20cm (4–8in) pot. Stand in full sun in a room with good ventilation. Repot every 3 years in spring when root-bound.





LIVING STONE

Lithops species

TEMPERATURE 18–26°C (65–78°F)
LIGHT Sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 1.5 x 0.75m (5ft x 2ft 6in)

The leafless stems of these South African natives look little flat-topped stones. Choose from plain grey-green types, or those with spotted and patterned foliage. In autumn, a white, daisy-like flower may grow from the crease in the top of the stem. Fun for children, these plants require little attention and are very easy to grow.

WATERING From winter to late summer, water only when the leaves start to shrivel; in autumn, water slightly more, so that the leaves remain firm.

FEEDING Apply a quarter-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once in autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a small 7.5–10cm (3–4in) pot in cactus compost (or a 2:1 mix of soil-based potting compost and horticultural grit). Set in full sun, especially in winter, when it will continue to grow. These plants can stay in the same pot for many years and prefer their own small, individual containers. Repot in late winter, just before you resume watering it more frequently.

MOONSTONES

Pachyphytum oviferum AGM

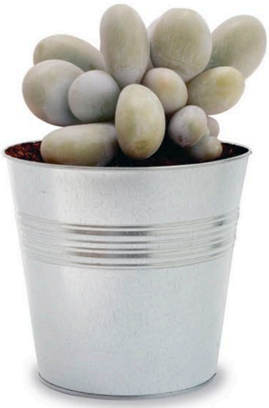
TEMPERATURE 10–27°C (50–80°F)
LIGHT Sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 10 x 30cm (4 x 12in)
WARNING! All parts toxic to pets

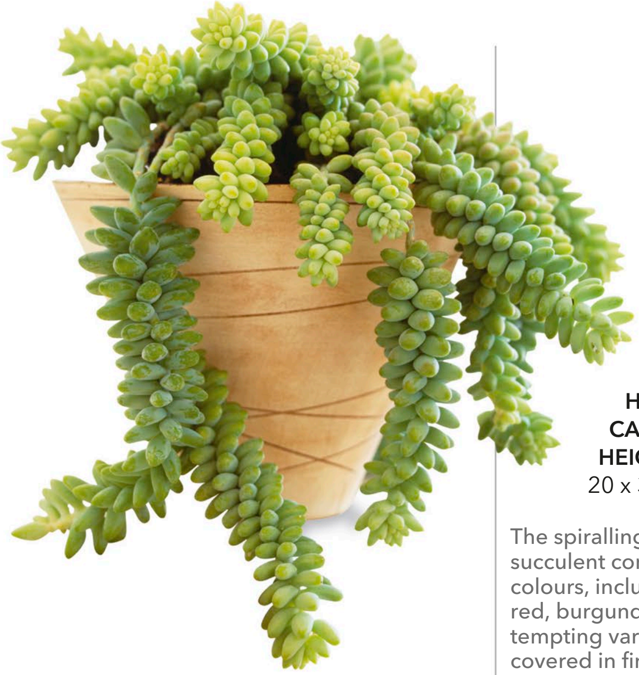
These tiny succulents look like a handful of beach pebbles planted in a pot, and are guaranteed to create a talking point, despite their diminutive size. The plump round leaves are pale blue-green to blue-purple, and in winter, the plant looks even more bizarre, when stems up to 30cm (12in) long appear, topped with dangling orange-red flowers.

WATERING Allow the soil to dry out before watering, and avoid getting water on the leaves. In winter, give a little more water as this is when the plant grows.

FEEDING Apply a quarter-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once in winter, although it will not suffer if not fed at all.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a small 7.5–10cm (3–4in) pot in cactus compost (or a 2:1 mix of soil-based potting compost and horticultural grit). Set in full sun, especially in winter when it is in growth. Only repot when the plant is root-bound, after it has flowered.





DONKEY'S TAIL

Sedum morganianum AGM

TEMPERATURE 10–27°C (50–80°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 10 x 30cm (4 x 12in)

This Mexican native has great appeal, its rope-like stems of tiny round leaves creating an amazing textural effect. It makes a great focal point on a shelf or windowsill, but handle the plant with care, as the leaves are brittle and break off easily. The small flowers, which form at the tips of the stems, rarely appear on plants grown indoors.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings from spring to autumn; water once a month in winter.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Grow in a small 7.5–10cm (3–4in) pot in cactus compost (or a 2:1 mix of soil-based potting compost and horticultural grit). Stand in a bright spot, but out of strong midday sun in summer. Repot every 2–3 years in spring, only when root-bound.

HOUSELEEK

Sempervivum species AGM

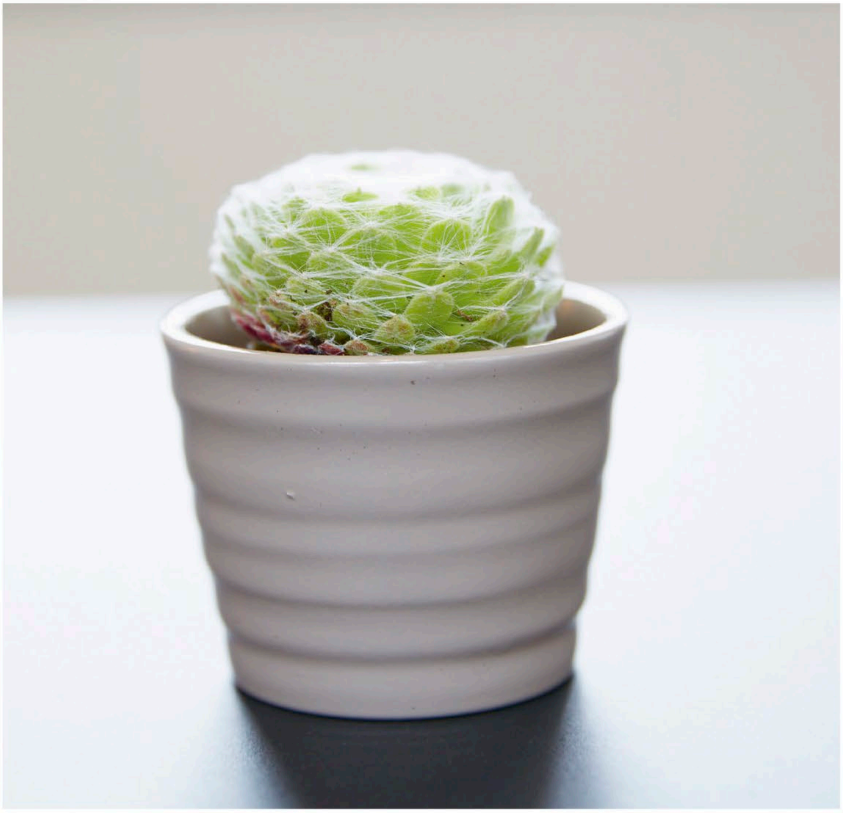
TEMPERATURE -14–27°C (50–80°F)
LIGHT Sun/Filtered sun
HUMIDITY Low
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD up to 20 x 30cm (8 x 12in)

The spiralling leaves of this tiny succulent come in a huge range of colours, including all shades of green, red, burgundy, and grey. Many sport tempting variegations, and some are covered in fine hairs. Starry flowers appear on stout stems in summer.

WATERING Allow the top of the compost to dry out between waterings from spring to autumn; water once a month in winter.

FEEDING Apply a half-strength balanced liquid fertilizer once a month from spring to autumn.

PLANTING AND CARE Plant in a 2:1 mix of soil-based compost and sand in a 7.5–10cm (3–4in) pot. Stand in full sun. The leaf rosette dies after flowering but new baby plants appear to replace the old ones. Repot every 2–3 years when root-bound.



AIR PLANTS

These tiny treasures can literally be grown in thin air, requiring no soil or compost to put on a performance. Plants come in a wide range of shapes and sizes, some resembling little sea urchins, while others look more like conventional bromeliads (see pp102–105), the family to which air plants belong. When mature, these beauties will burst into bloom, brightening up your home with exotic, colourful flowers. Few plants are easier to care for, so if you are a beginner, they will not disappoint.

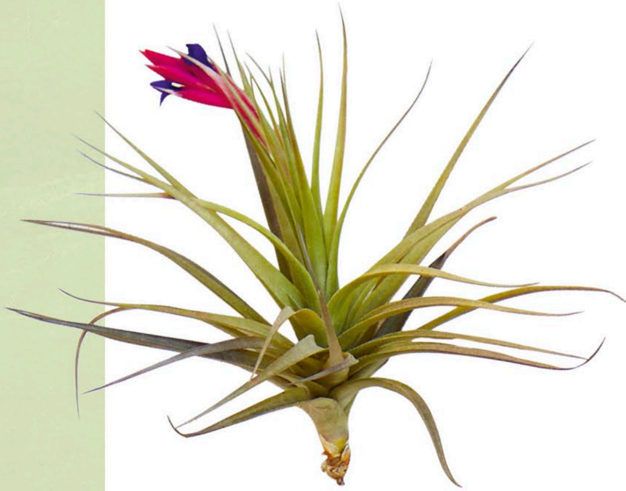
TEMPERATURE 15–24°C (60–75°F)
LIGHT Filtered sun
HUMIDITY High
CARE Easy
HEIGHT & SPREAD 10 x 45cm (4 x 18in)

The foliage of these pocket-sized plants ranges from silvery and spiky, to curled and spidery. Most flower annually and the blooms are often surprisingly large and colourful. Plants die after flowering but, like all bromeliads, baby plants form to replace the old ones (see pp206–07).

WATERING Place in a tray of tepid rainwater or distilled water once a week for 30 minutes to an hour, then leave to drain (see p185). Avoid wetting the flowers by propping up the air plants.

FEEDING Mist with a specialist *Tillandsia* fertilizer once a month.

PLANTING AND CARE Display plants in glass jars or shells, or on driftwood, bark, or a decorative tray. Do not use glue. Keep in a humid area out of direct sun and away from radiators and heaters.

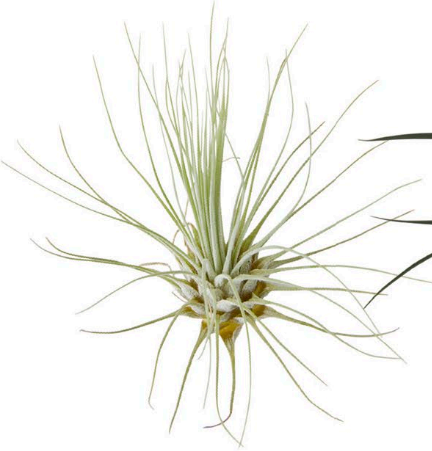


Tillandsia aeranthos

This air plant flowers reliably every year, with pink and purple blooms appearing between a spray of stiff green leaves.

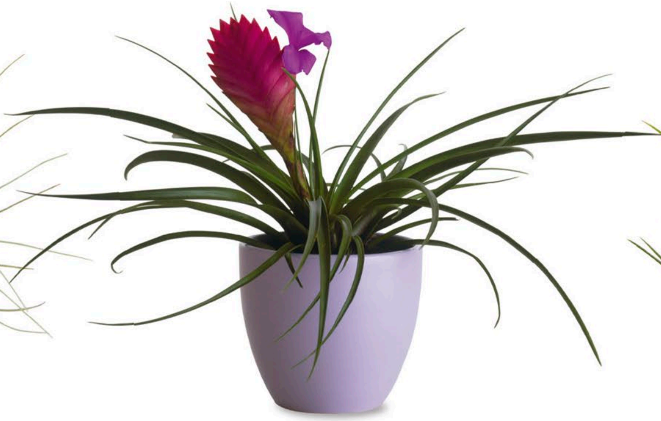
AIR PLANTS

Tillandsia species and hybrids



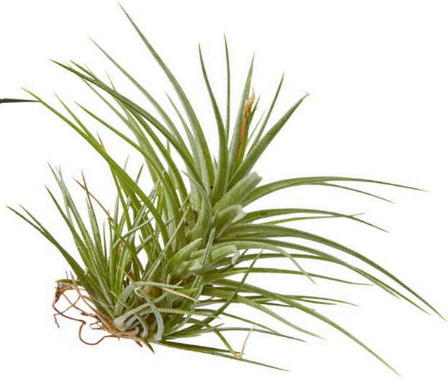
Tillandsia argentea AGM

The thin, spiky foliage of this tiny species radiates out from the centre, resembling a sea urchin. Mature plants also bear a long, slim, red flowerhead, which holds tiny purple blooms that are guaranteed to turn heads.



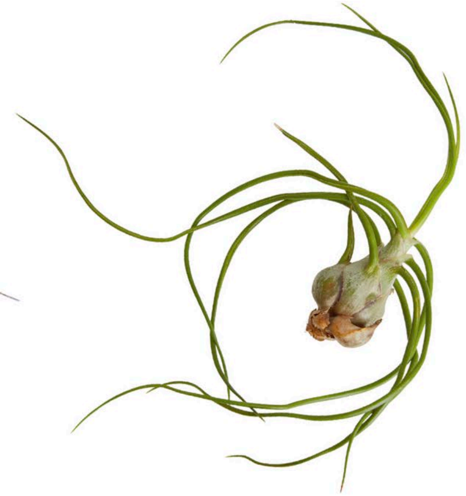
Tillandsia cyanea

One of the most popular air plants, the pink quill, as it is commonly known, has dark green strappy leaves and an oval-shaped flowerhead, made up of pink bracts (petal-like modified leaves) and small, violet-blue flowers.



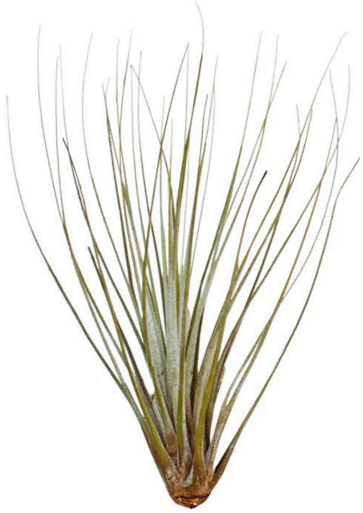
Tillandsia tenuifolia

This air plant soon forms a clump of spiky green foliage, and it will also tolerate a little neglect, quickly reviving after watering. The pink flower spikes resemble shooting stars and terminate in a cluster of tubular violet blooms.



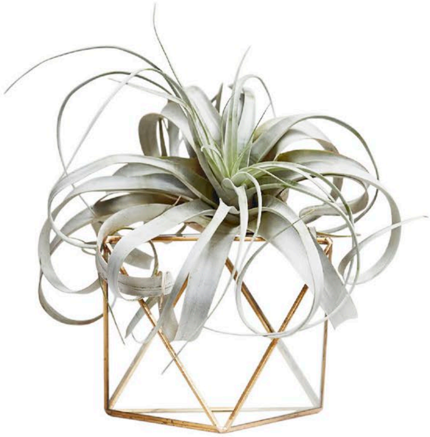
Tillandsia bulbosa

Like a spider with curled legs, the long thin foliage of this unusual air plant grows from a bulb-like centre, from which tubular pink and purple flowers emerge in early spring. The foliage also turns red when the buds form.



Tillandsia juncea

Small and compact, the silver grassy foliage of this elegant air plant is prone to drying out, so water it regularly every week. The blooms look like rows of tiny violet and pink lipsticks when they emerge from the narrow flower spike.



Tillandsia xerographica

The silver foliage of this must-have plant sprawls and curls to form a dense clump. As it requires less water than most, mist regularly rather than soaking. The long-lasting spike of violet blooms only appears on mature plants.

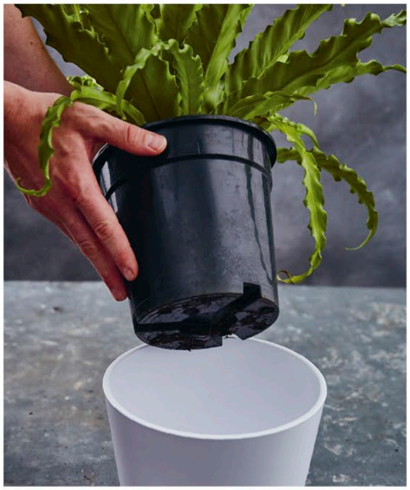
CARE AND CULTIVATION

BUYING A NEW HOUSE PLANT

It's fun visiting the plant shop or nursery to pick out your favourite plants, but before you hand over your money, take a look at these tips to make sure you buy strong, healthy ones that will thrive when you bring them home. Check out the tool kit, too (see right), and pick up anything you will need to care for your new purchases.

IN THE SHOP

Take a shopping list of the plants you like with you and try to stick to it when you get to the nursery or garden centre. If, when you arrive, you fall in love with a plant that is not on your list, check the plant label carefully or ask the nursery staff first before buying to make sure you can give it the conditions it needs. If you are sure you will be able to look after it well, give your chosen plant a thorough health check (see right), and look under the container to see whether it has drainage holes. If not, repot it when you get home, as a lack of drainage frequently leads to waterlogging and fungal diseases.



Check for drainage holes
Make sure the plant's pot has adequate drainage to prevent it from rotting. If it does not, repot it when you get home.

GIVE YOUR PLANTS A HEALTH CHECK

Inspect any potential plant purchase carefully using this checklist, and reject any that show signs of pests or diseases (see pp214–19).

1 **Check for signs of wilting**, which may be a sign of root pests.

2 **Look out for** dark spots or streaks on the leaves, stems, or flowers that could indicate disease or a virus.

3 **Inspect the undersides** of leaves and stems for pests or pest damage.

4 **Check the compost** for pests.

5 **Tip the plant out** of its pot (if you can) and check that it is not root-bound.

TAKING YOUR PLANT HOME

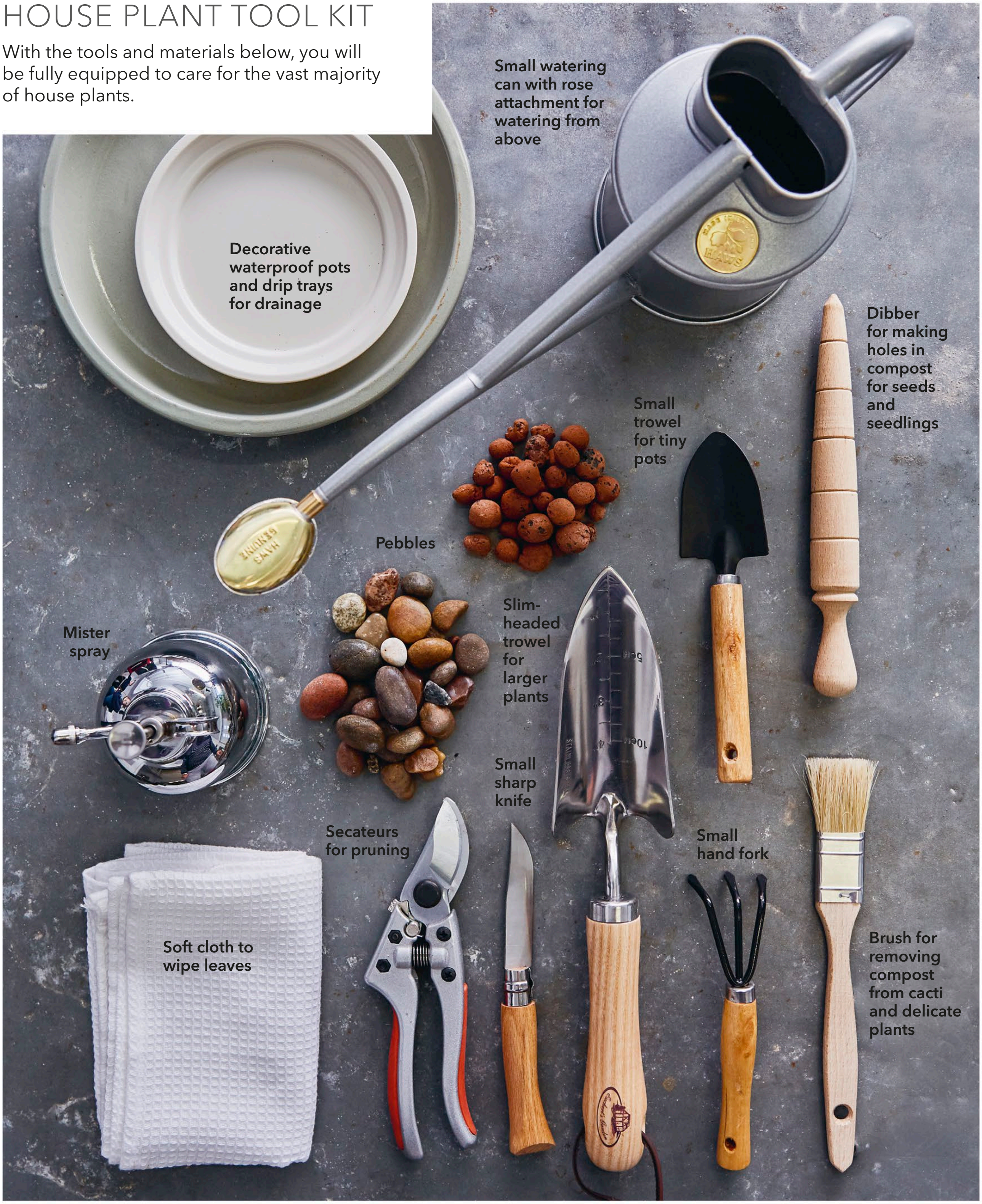
Depending on where you live, you may need to protect tender plants from the cold in winter by wrapping them in cellophane. Do not expose them to temperatures below freezing point, even for just a short time, as this could prove fatal for tender types. If the odd leaf or flower stem is damaged during the journey home, cut it off down to healthy growth or the base of the plant to prevent diseases entering through the wounds.

AT HOME

Unwrap the plant, repot it if necessary (see left), then place it, still in its plastic pot, in a waterproof container, known in the trade as a "sleeve", or on a saucer. Give the plant a good drink (see pp184–87) and leave it to drain. Finally, check the plant's other care requirements (see the Plant Profiles chapter, pp100–75) and place it in a suitable spot that provides the optimum light and temperature for it to thrive.

HOUSE PLANT TOOL KIT

With the tools and materials below, you will be fully equipped to care for the vast majority of house plants.

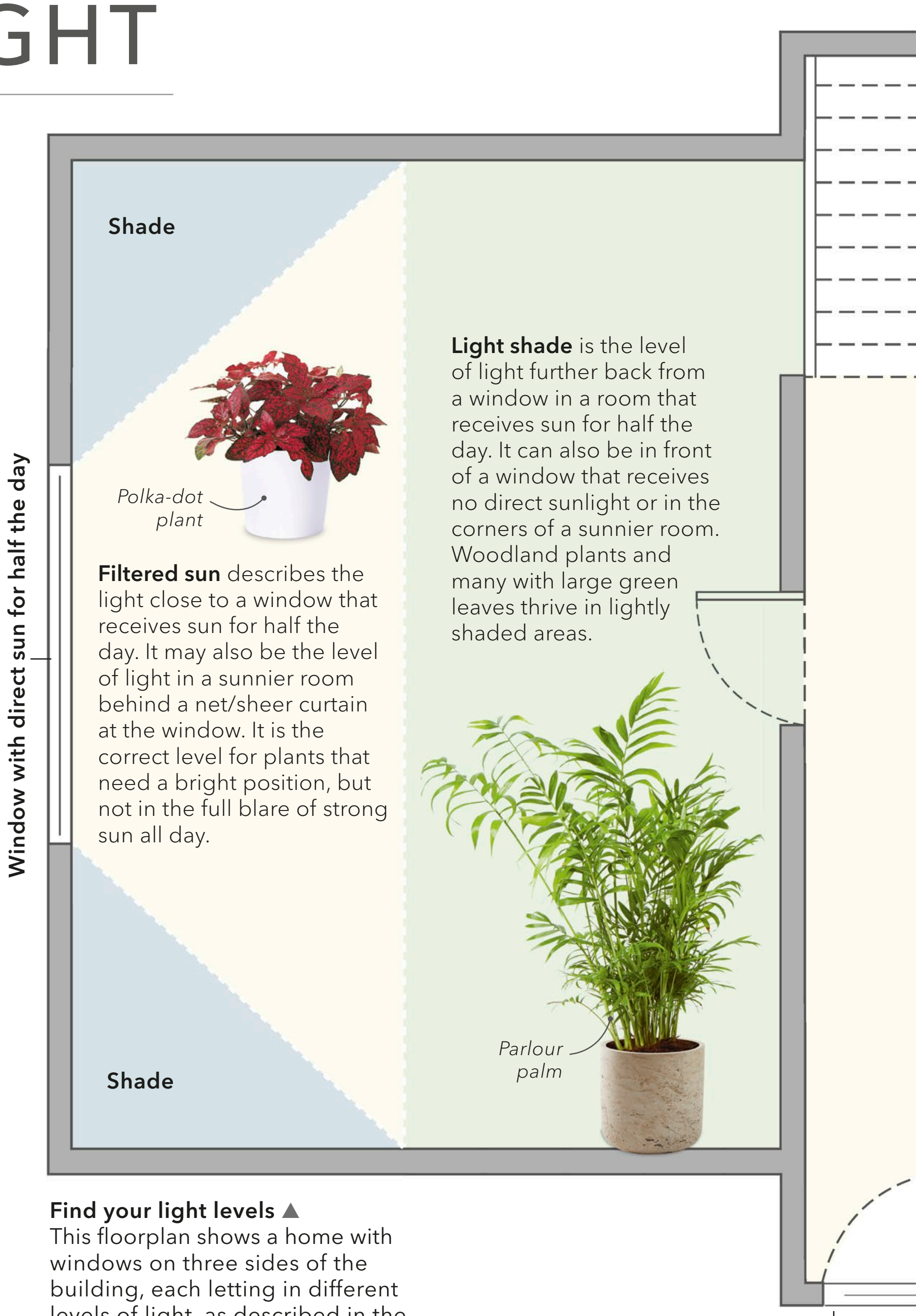

Small watering can with rose attachment for watering from above
Decorative waterproof pots and drip trays for drainage
Dibber for making holes in compost for seeds and seedlings
Small trowel for tiny pots
Pebbles
Mister spray
Slim-headed trowel for larger plants
Small sharp knife
Secateurs for pruning
Small hand fork
Soft cloth to wipe leaves
Brush for removing compost from cacti and delicate plants

GET THE LIGHT RIGHT

Providing your plant with the amount of light it needs is essential for its long-term health. Sun supplies plants with energy – too little may inhibit their ability to flower, while too much can scorch the leaves or lead to wilting, so assess the light levels in your home to find the ideal positions for your plants.

CHOOSING THE PERFECT SPOT

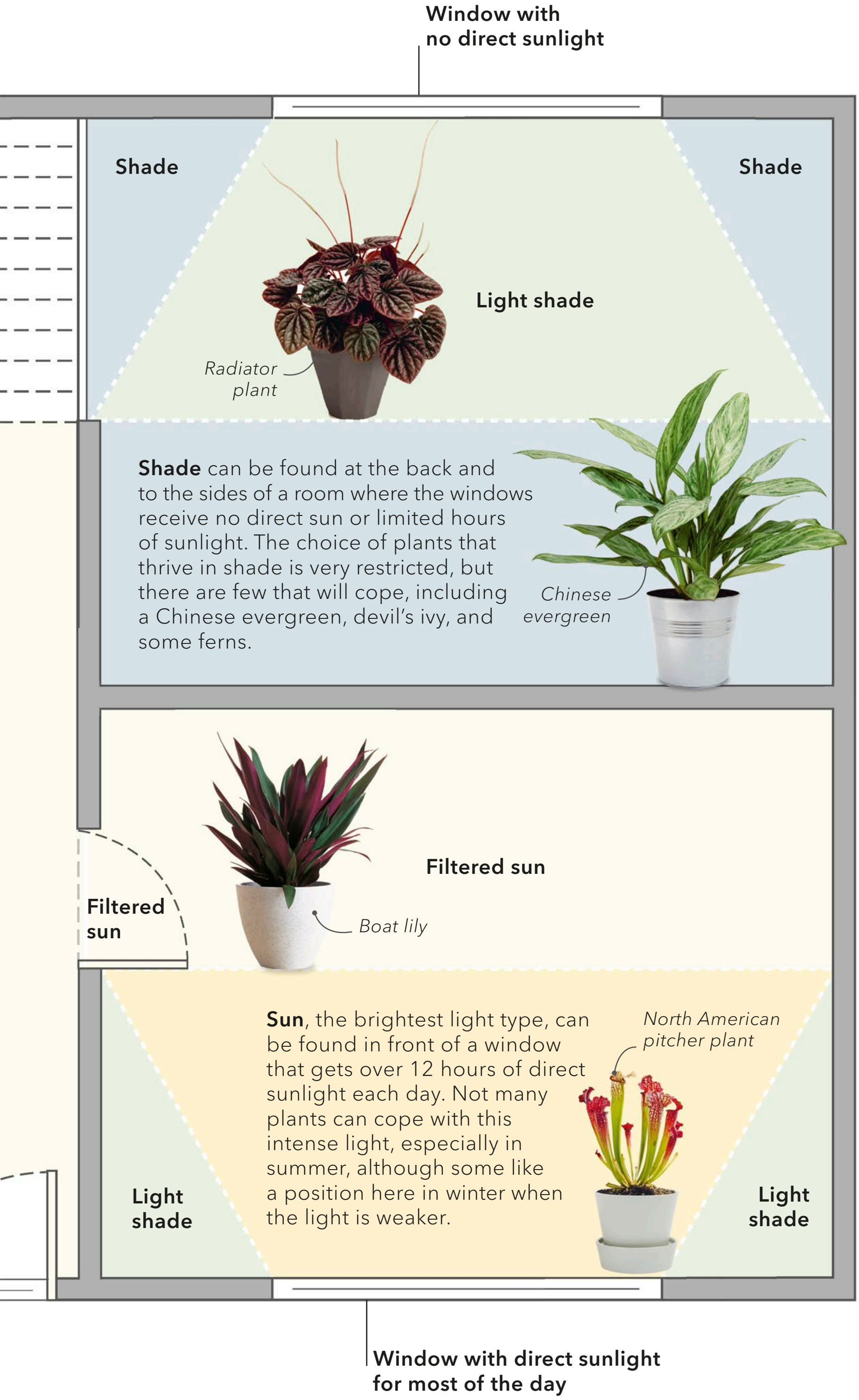
Whether you live in a bright house with windows on all sides, or in a small flat that receives little or no direct sunlight, there is a range of plants to suit your situation. Use this floorplan to help you identify what light levels you have in your living space, so that you can choose the best plants to match those conditions. Remember to take into account neighbouring buildings or tall trees that may cast additional shade throughout the day, and bear in mind that light levels may fluctuate over the course of the year, depending on the season.



Filtered sun describes the light close to a window that receives sun for half the day. It may also be the level of light in a sunnier room behind a net/sheer curtain at the window. It is the correct level for plants that need a bright position, but not in the full blare of strong sun all day.

Light shade is the level of light further back from a window in a room that receives sun for half the day. It can also be in front of a window that receives no direct sunlight or in the corners of a sunnier room. Woodland plants and many with large green leaves thrive in lightly shaded areas.

Find your light levels ▲
This floorplan shows a home with windows on three sides of the building, each letting in different levels of light, as described in the Plant Profiles chapter (pp100–75). Note that one room may receive up to three different levels of sunlight.


Window with no direct sunlight
Shade
Shade
Light shade
Radiator plant
Chinese evergreen
Filtered sun
Filtered sun
Boat lily
North American pitcher plant
Light shade
Light shade
Window with direct sunlight for most of the day

Shade can be found at the back and to the sides of a room where the windows receive no direct sun or limited hours of sunlight. The choice of plants that thrive in shade is very restricted, but there are few that will cope, including a Chinese evergreen, devil's ivy, and some ferns.

Sun, the brightest light type, can be found in front of a window that gets over 12 hours of direct sunlight each day. Not many plants can cope with this intense light, especially in summer, although some like a position here in winter when the light is weaker.

TIPS FOR INCREASING LIGHT LEVELS

1 Clean leaves regularly to increase the amount of light that reaches your plant. Use a soft, damp cloth to remove dust every week, taking care not to damage the foliage.

2 Turn your plants by 90 degrees every few days so that each side receives sufficient sun and grows evenly, no matter what light levels your living space receives. This will prevent the plant becoming misshapen over time (see p213).

3 Take note of light variations between seasons. In countries with marked seasons, sunlight is stronger in summer and weaker in winter, when the days are also shorter. In these areas, plants that like filtered sun may need to be set closer to a sunny window in winter. If this is the case, take care not to leave them trapped behind curtains on a cold windowsill at night, as the extreme drop in temperature could cause them harm.

4 Boost low light levels in your living space using artificial lights (also known as "grow lights"), which imitate the sun's rays. There is a range of easy-to-install units suitable for the home gardener; but always ask the supplier's advice before buying, as some may emit too much or too little light for the plants you wish to grow.

KEY

🟨 **Sun**
☐ **Filtered sun**
🟩 **Light shade**
🟦 **Shade**

CHECK THE TEMPERATURE

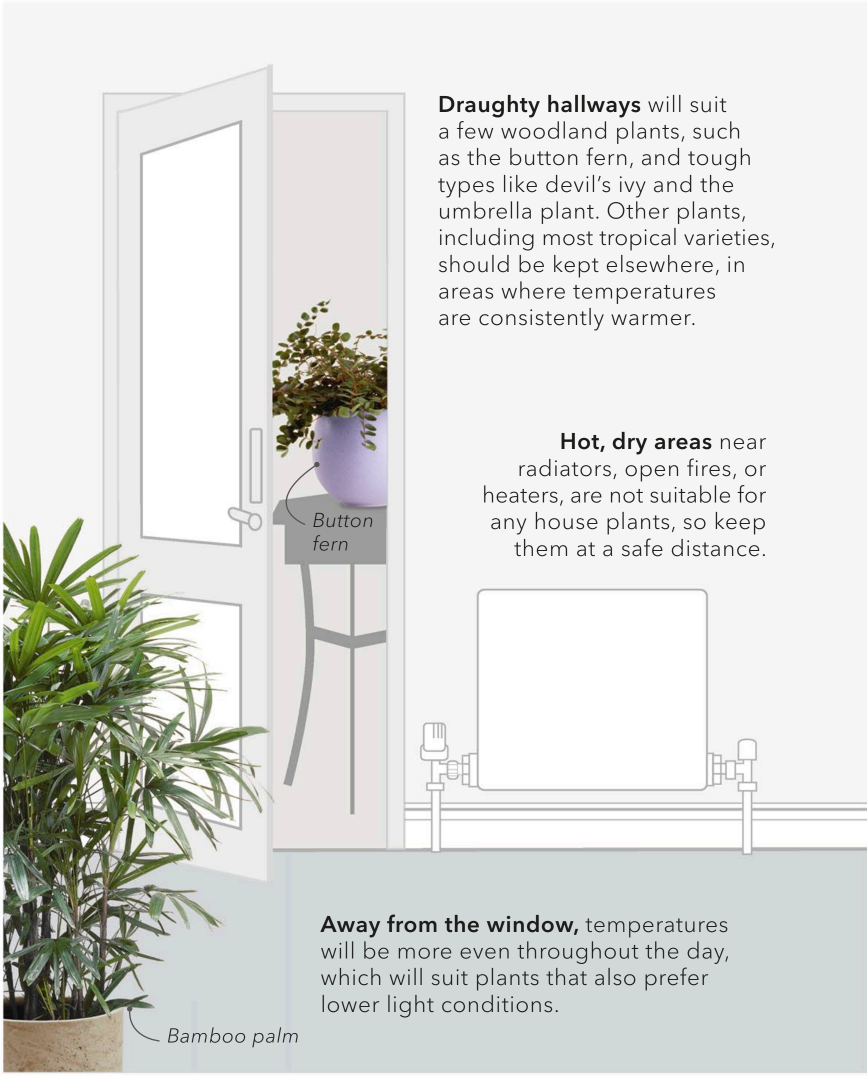
While most house plants will grow quite happily in our warm homes, they may suffer in extremely hot or cold spots. Check your plants' preferred temperatures (see pp100–75) and use the advice below to find the perfect spot to display them.

> "Keep tropical plants away from heat sources and draughty areas."

PROVIDE OPTIMUM TEMPERATURES

While many house plants will cope with a relatively wide temperature range, always check your plant's specific needs in the Plant Profile chapter (see pp100–75). As many house plants come from tropical areas, few will be able to deal with long periods of very low temperatures. Equally, extended hot spells could cause some plants to dehydrate quickly and wilt. If you have a plant that you cannot identify, the safest range is between 12–24°C (54–75°F), which suits the majority of house plants.

Find the right temperature ▶
Use this illustration to identify different sources of heat and draughts and find the best locations to display your plants.



Draughty hallways will suit a few woodland plants, such as the button fern, and tough types like devil's ivy and the umbrella plant. Other plants, including most tropical varieties, should be kept elsewhere, in areas where temperatures are consistently warmer.

Hot, dry areas near radiators, open fires, or heaters, are not suitable for any house plants, so keep them at a safe distance.

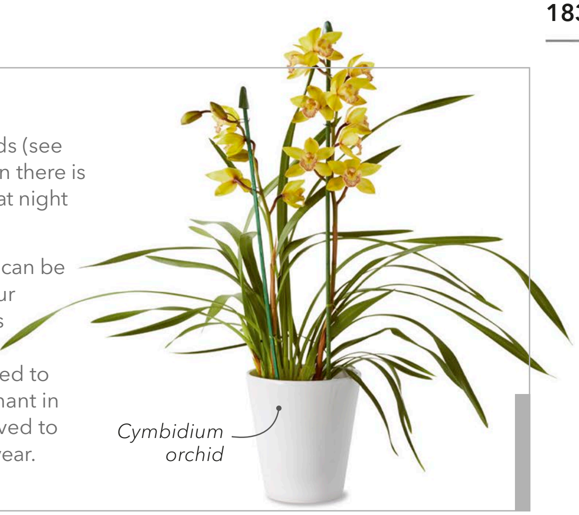
Away from the window, temperatures will be more even throughout the day, which will suit plants that also prefer lower light conditions.

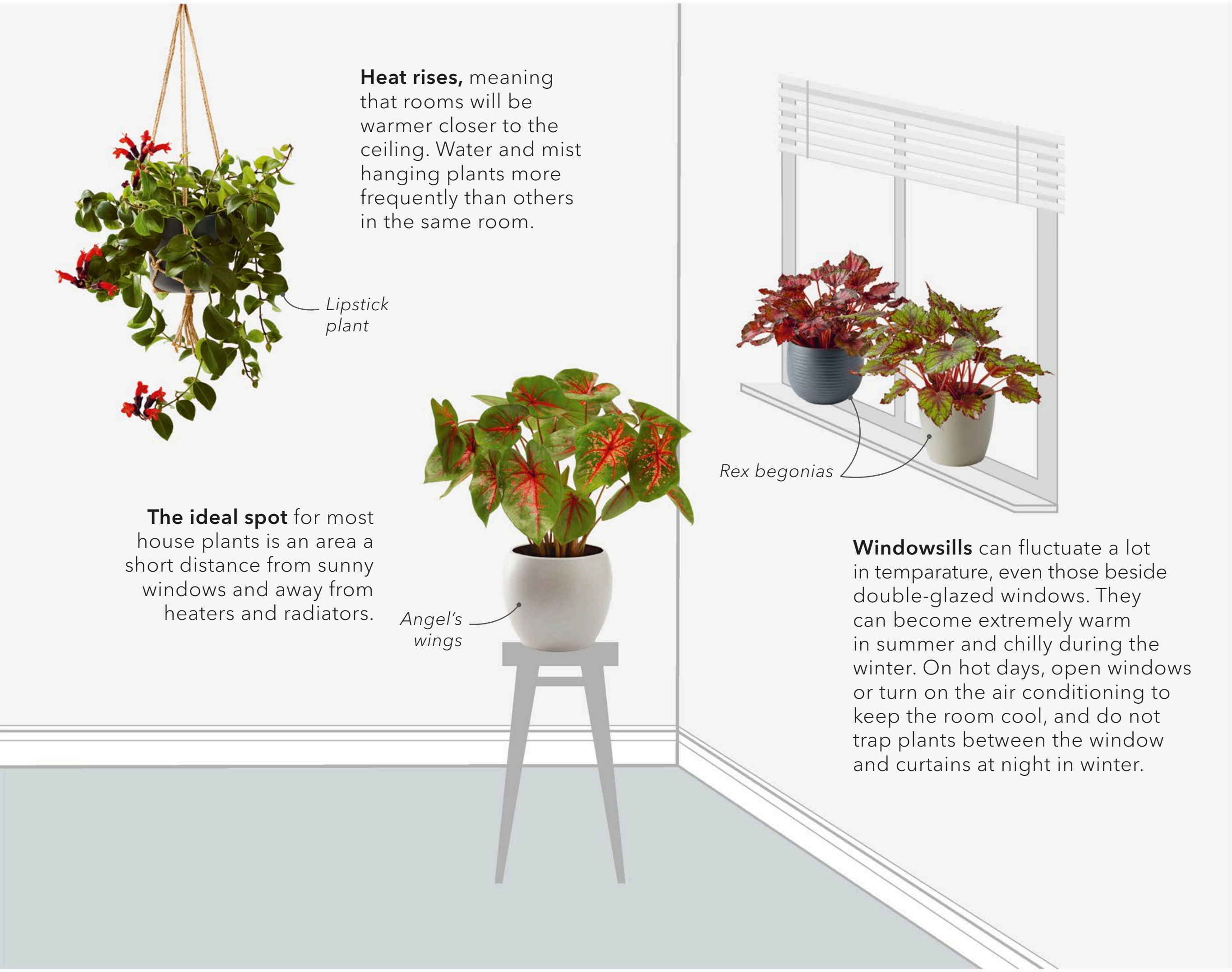
NORMAL TEMPERATURE VARIATIONS

All plants are adapted to deal with some fluctuations in temperature, but these should not fall below or exceed its minimum or maximum temperature requirements for long periods (see Plant Profiles, pp100–75), as this could harm the plant (see pp213).

Day-to-night temperature drops of about 5–10°C (9–18°F) are normal for most plants, as that is what they would experience in nature. However, some plants, such as cymbidium orchids (see right), will only form flowers when there is a drop of more than 10°C (18°F) at night (see p197).

Seasonal temperature variations can be felt by most plants, even inside our heated homes, and in winter, this often leads to a reduction in growth. Some plants have adapted to cold climates by becoming dormant in winter; these will need to be moved to an unheated area at this time of year.





Heat rises, meaning that rooms will be warmer closer to the ceiling. Water and mist hanging plants more frequently than others in the same room.

The ideal spot for most house plants is an area a short distance from sunny windows and away from heaters and radiators.

Windowsills can fluctuate a lot in temparature, even those beside double-glazed windows. They can become extremely warm in summer and chilly during the winter. On hot days, open windows or turn on the air conditioning to keep the room cool, and do not trap plants between the window and curtains at night in winter.

HOW TO WATER YOUR HOUSE PLANTS

Watering most house plants can be pretty straightforward provided that you understand their individual needs. By following a few simple rules, you can make sure that they receive just the right amount of moisture to keep them thriving.

WHEN TO WATER

Most house plants prefer moist compost in spring and summer when they are in growth, but take care not to water too much; soggy, waterlogged compost causes disease and can be fatal, while a little drought is easily remedied. To prevent wet compost, keep your plants in pots with drainage holes at the bottom, so that any excess water can drain out, and tip away any surplus that is sitting in the plant's decorative pot ("sleeve") or saucer about an hour after watering.

HOW TO WATER

To keep your plants in peak condition, check the specific advice for each one in the Plant Profile chapter (see pp100–75) and use the watering method (or methods) appropriate to your plant, as outlined in the five options on the right.

THE GOLDEN RULES OF WATERING

1 Keep plants in pots with drainage holes to prevent waterlogging.

2 Water most plants every 2–4 days (or as required) in spring and summer to keep the compost moist (not waterlogged).

3 Water desert cacti and succulents less frequently (only when the top of the compost feels dry).

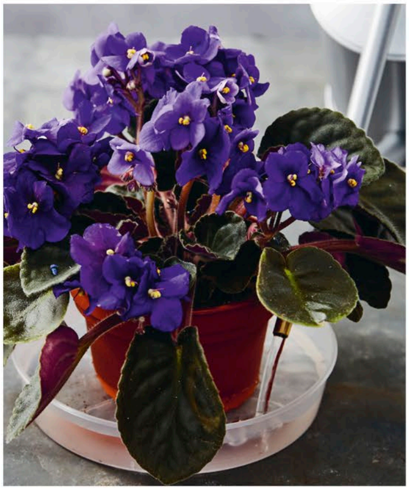
4 Reduce frequency of watering in winter when plant growth is slower and temperatures are lower.

5 Tip out excess water from pot sleeves and saucers to prevent overly soggy compost.

6 Avoid getting water on the leaves and stems of plants with soft, furry foliage, or succulents and cacti.

7 Check the Plant Profile chaper (see pp100–75) to see if your plant prefers rainwater or distilled water.

Watering from above
Pour water from above if your plant is happy for its foliage to be doused; most tropical plants and ferns are in this category. Make sure that the compost is also soaked or you risk watering the leaves without any moisture reaching the roots.



Watering from below
Set your plant in a pot with drainage holes in a tray of water about 2cm (¾in) deep. Leave for 20 minutes, then remove and drain. Use this method for plants that do not like wet leaves or stems, such as African violets, or if foliage is covering the compost.

> *"Take care not to overwater your plants; soggy compost will harm them far more quickly than drought."*

MOISTURE LEVELS EXPLAINED

Almost dry compost should feel dry 2cm (¾in) beneath the surface, but may be slightly damp lower down. Most succulents and cacti require their compost to be this dry between waterings.

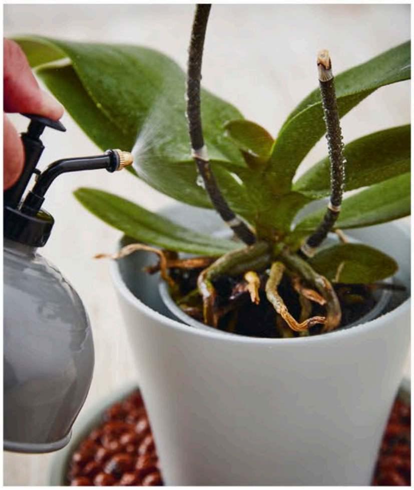
A dry top layer of compost should feel dry to the touch on the surface. Many plants should feel dry before water is reapplied; others may only need this level of moisture in winter when growth is slow.

Moist compost should feel damp to touch, but not look wet and glistening. Make sure the plant pot has drainage holes and tip out any excess water about an hour after watering.

Wet compost should be entirely soaked and have a glistening surface. Carnivorous plants are among the few that require this. Plant in a pot with drainage holes and stand in a tray of water.

STOP THE ROT

Drought-loving cacti and succulents like their leaves and stems to remain dry at all times, so add a layer of grit (known as a "mulch") on top of the compost if repotting. Mulch helps water to quickly drain away, preventing them from rotting.



Misting leaves and aerial roots
Some plants absorb moisture through their leaves and aerial roots. Examples include orchids, Swiss cheese plants and areca palms. Mist the leaves and roots regularly, but also water the compost to keep them healthy.

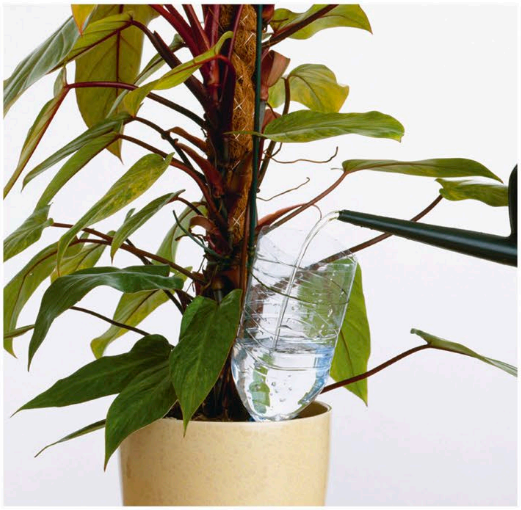
Watering bromeliads
The leaves and bracts (petal-like modified leaves) of most bromeliads form a cup-like reservoir in the centre of the plant. Fill this up with rainwater or distilled water, replenishing it every few weeks. Also water the compost so that it is moist.

Soaking air plants
Air plants are best soaked in a tray of rainwater or distilled water for an hour once a week. After soaking, leave to drain, and make sure they dry fully within 4 hours to prevent them rotting. Alternatively, mist them 2–3 times a week.

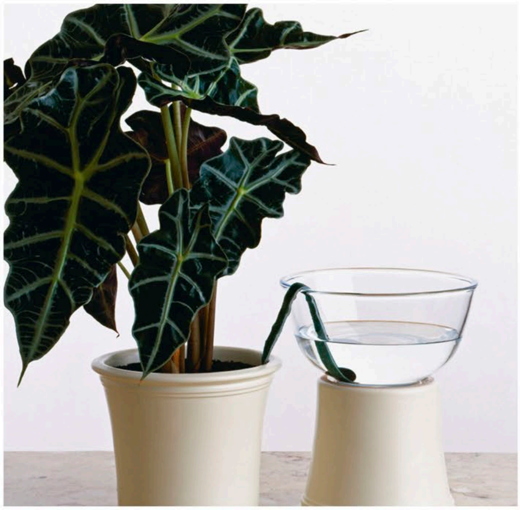
WATERING WHEN YOU GO AWAY

Most plants will survive a long weekend without any water, and many cacti and succulents will be fine for a couple of weeks if you bring them into a cool, bright room and give them a drink immediately on your return. For all other plants, you will need to take action. If you do not have a green-fingered neighbour or friend who can water while you are away, try these simple tricks to keep your plants in good health.

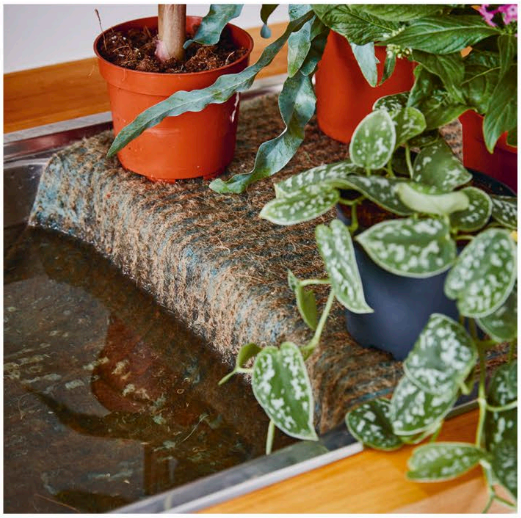
> *“Use these clever tricks to keep your plants hydrated while you’re away from home.”*



Water bottle method
Cut the bottom off a plastic water bottle, and make a tiny hole in the cap with a tip of hot skewer. Screw the cap onto the bottle and push it into the compost. Fill the bottle with water; this will then drip slowly into the compost. Make sure the plant pot has drainage holes so that the compost does not become too wet.



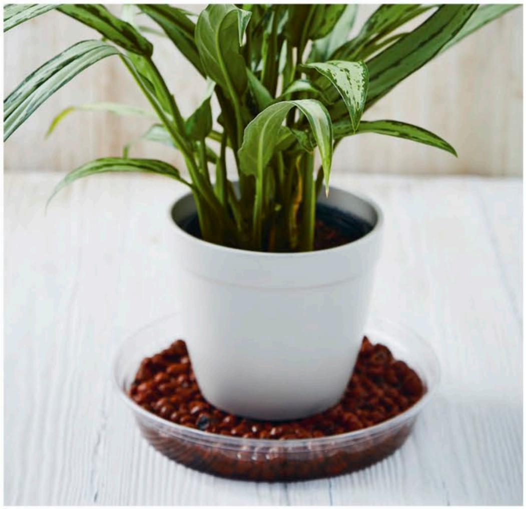
The wick system
Stand a bowl of water on an upturned pot so that it is higher than the surface of the compost. Weigh down a strip of capillary matting (available from garden centres) in the bowl, then push the other end into the compost. The matting will slowly water the plant. This technique is the best option for watering single plants, or large ones that cannot be moved.



Easy sink method
Fill the kitchen sink with water and place either capillary matting or an old towel on the draining board, with one end in the water. Remove your plants from their sleeves and set them on the wet matting or towel, so that moisture can be drawn up through the drainage holes to the roots.

RAISING HUMIDITY LEVELS

The dry atmosphere in our homes can cause some plants' foliage to dry out and turn brown, inhibiting growth. The many house plants that hail from the tropics are especially vulnerable, as they are adapted to thrive in humid air. Try to replicate this atmosphere in your home using one or two of the methods here.



Tray of damp pebbles
An easy way to raise humidity levels is to set your plant on a tray filled with stone or hydroleca ceramic pebbles. Pour in water so that it just covers the pebbles and set your plant pot on top. As the water gradually evaporates, it creates a humid atmosphere around the plant.

Misting plants
Increase the humidity around your plant by misting the leaves and aerial roots every day or two, reducing the frequency to once a week in winter for most plants. Check the advice for your chosen plants in the Plant Profiles chapter (see pp100–75) as some prefer to be misted with rainwater or distilled water.

Grouping plants
All plants release water through a process known as "transpiration", just like we do when we breathe out. You can create a tropical microclimate by grouping a few plants together, where each of them will benefit from the moisture released by their neighbours.

HUMIDITY LEVELS EXPLAINED

High humidity means that the air is saturated with moisture. Tropical plants thrive in this atmosphere, but they may be difficult to care for in homes with central heating (which can dry out the air). If you want to keep these demanding plants, place them in a humid kitchen or bathroom, or invest in a room humidifier.

Moderate humidity is required by many house plants, including orchids, ferns, some palms, and a large number of foliage plants. Misting them regularly, setting them on a tray of damp pebbles, and grouping a few together will help to raise the humidity to the correct level.

Low humidity is where the atmosphere holds little moisture. Plants from arid regions (such as cacti, succulents, and those from Mediterranean areas) are adapted to these conditions. Most rooms in centrally heated homes have low levels of air moisture, although drought-lovers will not cope well in humid kitchens or bathrooms.

FEEDING
YOUR PLANTS

Put your house plants on a diet of essential nutrients and they will reward you with healthy flowers and foliage. Like us, however, they can suffer if you feed them too much or too little. Knowing what to feed your plants, and how often, will help them stay on track.

> *"Fertilizer provides the nutrients plants would draw from the soil if planted outdoors."*

FOOD ESSENTIALS

While most plants growing in the ground can get all the nutrients they need from the soil, plants in pots rely entirely on you for their food supply. Many composts contain fertilizers, but after your plant has used these up, you will have to step in and start feeding them. The type of fertilizer and dosage depends on the plant, so check its specific needs in the Plant Profile chapter (pp100–75).

Well-nourished plants
A well-fed plant will display vigorous growth and none of the tell-tale signs of over- or under-feeding, such as yellowing or pale leaves.

PLANT NUTRIENTS EXPLAINED

The main plant nutrients are nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K), also known as potash (see below). Balanced fertilizers contain all three nutrients, together with a range of trace elements that plants needs in smaller quantities. The nutrient content of a fertilizer is often shown on the packaging as a ratio of N:P:K; a balanced fertilizer, for instance, would be 20:20:20. Most plants only need to be fed when they are actively growing, usually between spring and autumn, and they require few or no extra nutrients in winter. Plants also take up fertilizer through their roots in a solution, so dry compost will not only dehydrate them but also limit their ability to absorb fertilizer.

Nitrogen (N) is known as the leaf-maker, because it promotes strong, healthy foliage. This in turn encourages good overall growth, since the foliage feeds the whole plant. It is particularly important for leafy house plants.

Phosphorus (P) is the root-maker, and it is required by all plants to grow and develop. The roots transport food and water to the plant, thus enabling strong and healthy growth.

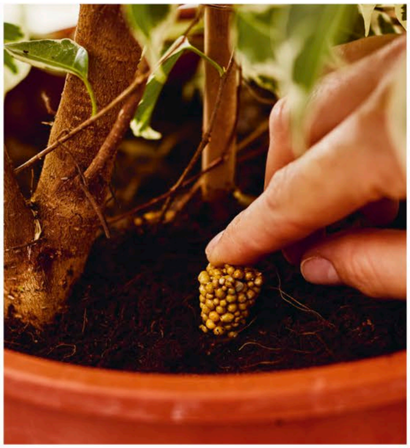
Potassium (potash) (K) is essential for the development of flowers and fruits. Fertilizers with a high potash content are often given to plants a few months before they are due bloom to encourage lots of buds to form.

CHOOSING A FERTILIZER

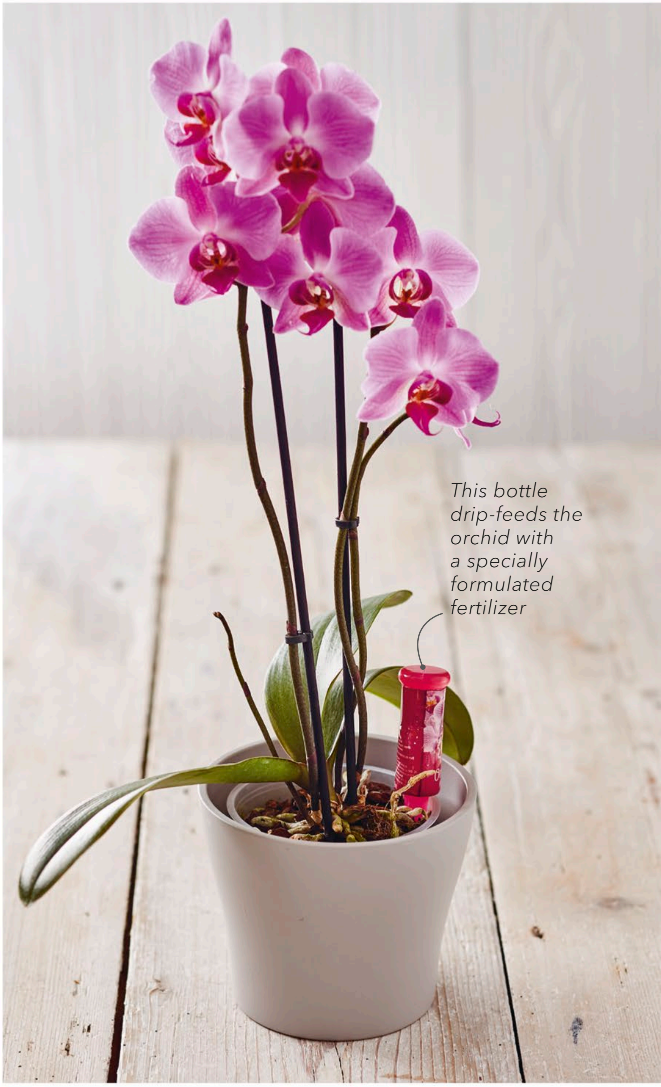
Different plants have different dietary needs, so make sure you are giving the correct fertilizer at the right dosage. Remember that overfeeding plants can be as bad, or worse, than underfeeding them (see p213).

Balanced liquid fertilizer The majority of house plants need a balanced liquid fertilizer, which you can buy as either a powder or liquid that you then dilute, or as a ready-mixed solution. This type of fertilizer is applied at regular intervals throughout the growing season, usually from spring to autumn.

High-potash fertilizer This fertilizer is rich in flower-promoting potassium (see opposite). It is usually sold as a liquid that you dilute before use. Tomato fertilizers have a high potash content, and can be used on flowering plants as well as those that produce fruits, such as the Jerusalem cherry.



Slow-release granular fertilizer Large or woody plants, such as trees, shrubs, and perennial climbers, may benefit from an all-purpose granular fertilizer. Apply undiluted as granules or in tablet form (shown left) to the compost once a year, usually in early spring. Watering breaks down the granules, which then release their nutrients.



This bottle drip-feeds the orchid with a specially formulated fertilizer

Specialist house plant fertilizer Manufacturers have developed fertilizers that have been carefully formulated for plants with specific needs, such as orchids, cacti, and carnivorous plants. They are usually sold in simple-to-use solutions; some, for instance, come in small bottles that can be inserted into the compost, where they drip-feed nutrients to the plant over time (see above).

CHOOSING COMPOST
FOR YOUR PLANTS

Use this guide to choose the best type of compost for your plant, and any additional materials you may need when potting it up. Always use fresh compost when repotting (see pp192–93); do not reuse old compost from other plants, as this will lack nutrients and could also harbour hidden diseases or pests.

WHAT IS COMPOST?

"Compost" (or, more accurately, "growing media") is the term commonly used to describe the soil-like material that potted plants are grown in. There are many different types, made up of a combination of soil (or "loam"), decomposed organic matter (similar to the compost you may make at home in a compost bin), aggregates such as sand and grit, and fertilizers. Some also contain peat, but because its extraction threatens the sustainability of natural peat bogs, many people prefer to use peat-free alternatives.

Soil- or loam-based compost
Also known as John Innes compost, this type contains sterilized soil, together with some of the natural materials in multipurpose composts and a range of essential plant nutrients. It is generally used for plants that will live in their pots for more than one year.

BEST FOR Trees, shrubs, and perennial climbers

Multipurpose compost
Also known as all-purpose compost, this lightweight type is available with or without peat. Made from natural materials, such as coir, bark, and composted wood fibre, most also contain enough fertilizer to feed plants for a few weeks.

BEST FOR Annual flowering house plants

House plant compost
Formulated to meet the needs of most house plants, this offers a quick and easy solution if you do not know the needs of your plant. Similar to multipurpose compost, most types contain peat and a range of essential plant nutrients.

BEST FOR Most house plants, except for those with special needs, such as orchids and cacti (see opposite)

Seed and cutting compost
As the name suggests, this is the best choice for sowing seeds and taking cuttings. It is free-draining to prevent rotting and its fine texture means that even tiny seeds are in contact with the compost, aiding germination.

BEST FOR Sowing seeds; taking cuttings; potting up young seedlings

Specialist composts
Formulated for specific plant groups, such as orchids, cacti, or carnivorous plants, this range of composts takes the guesswork out of making your own mixes for plants that demand very particular conditions.

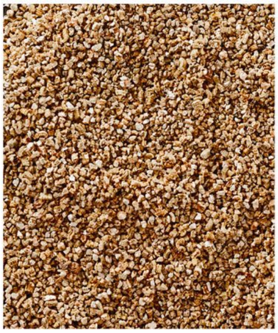
BEST FOR Orchids, cacti and succulents, carnivorous plants

Ericaceous compost
Similar to multipurpose, this compost is designed for plants that require acidic soil conditions, such as azaleas and blue hydrangeas. After planting, remember to use a fertilizer for acid-loving plants when those in the compost have been used up.

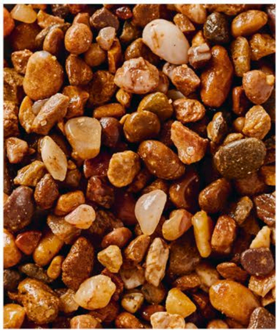
BEST FOR Azaleas, blue hydrangeas, and some ferns

OTHER MATERIALS YOU MAY NEED

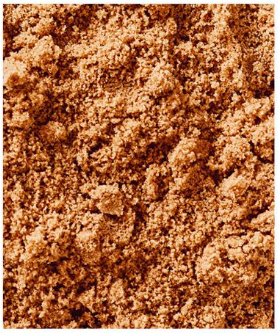
The following materials are often mixed with compost to lighten or aerate it, or to help increase drainage. Check the potting advice for your particular plant in the Plant Profiles chapter (pp100–75) to see if it needs them, and the correct quantities to use.



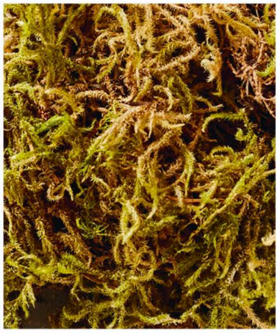
Vermiculite and perlite are minerals that have been heated to produce spongy grains. Both increase drainage while retaining and holding water well, then releasing it slowly back into the compost. They are often mixed with compost, or used to cover seeds to keep them moist.



Gravel and grit can both prevent soggy compost. Gravel, if added to the bottom of a pot, creates a reservoir that water can drain into, while smaller grit particles are often mixed with composts to increase drainage, providing ideal conditions for succulents and other drought-lovers.



Horticultural sand is often used in combination with compost to create the free-draining conditions succulents and other drought-loving plants need. Always use washed, sterilized, fine-grade sand; builders' sand contains too much lime for most house plants.



Sphagnum moss can be placed on the surface of compost to help create the moist conditions enjoyed by some plants, such as ferns. It is also included in the growing medium for carnivorous plants and a few other species that like wet or boggy conditions.

POTS AND REPOTTING

Choosing the right pot will help you to keep your house plants healthy. A good container should offer plenty of drainage, and will need to be replaced every few years as the plant grows, to avoid its roots becoming congested and "root-bound".

HOW TO TELL A PLANT NEEDS REPOTTING

Check the following factors, which can mean your plant needs repotting:

1 Waterlogged compost may indicate that the plant's pot has no drainage, in which case it needs a new one with drainage holes.

2 Roots are growing through the drainage holes at the bottom of the container, suggesting the plant is root-bound (also known as pot-bound).

3 The roots are tightly encircling the sides of the root ball when you tip it out. Note: some plants prefer their roots to be confined, so check the repotting advice for yours in the Plant Profile chapter (see pp100–75)

4 The leaves are pale or yellow, which may be a sign that the roots are congested and unable to take up nutrients efficiently.

5 The plant is wilting, which may also be a sign of congested roots.

HOW TO REPOT A PLANT

When repotting a plant, opt for a pot one size larger than the container in which it is currently housed, with drainage holes at the bottom to allow excess water to filter out. You can use either a decorative pot with drainage holes and a waterproof saucer, as we have done here, or a plain plastic pot, which can then be hidden inside a prettier waterproof container, known as a "sleeve".

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANT

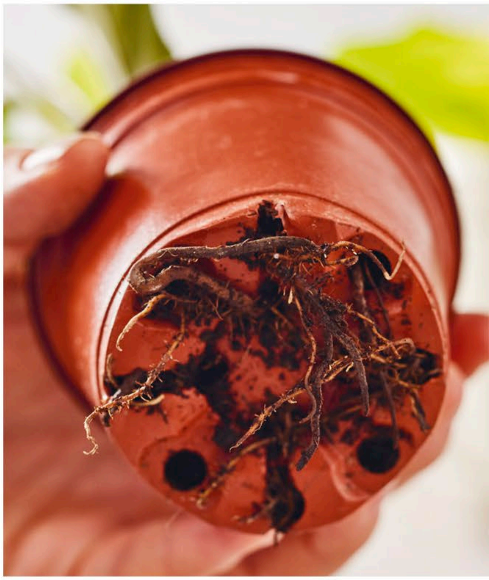
- Root-bound plant

OTHER MATERIALS

- Pot one size larger than the original with drainage holes in the bottom
- Compost to suit the plant (see Plant Profiles, pp100–175)
- Decorative waterproof container (optional)

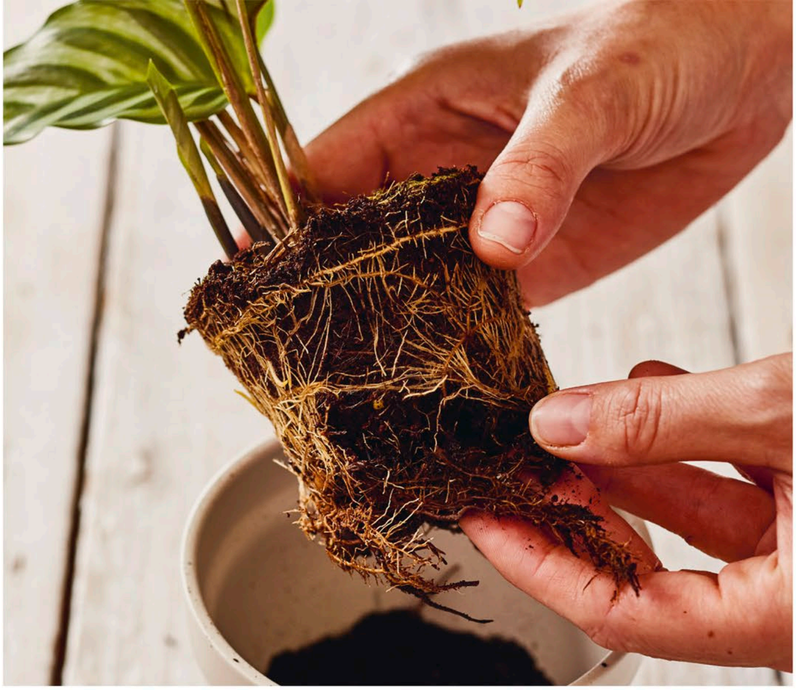
TOOLS

- Watering can (fitted with a rose attachment if necessary)



1 Most plants are repotted every 2–3 years, or annually when they are young. If you suspect yours is root-bound, check to see if the roots are growing through the drainage holes of its pot.

2 Choose a new pot that is wide and deep enough to fit the root ball, with some space around the edges and at the top to allow for watering. Water the plant well about half an hour before repotting it.



3 Add a layer of compost to the bottom of the new pot. Remove the plant from its original container. Gently tease out the roots that are tightly packed around the edges or at the bottom, and set the plant on the compost, checking that the top is sitting 1cm (½in) below the rim. This allows space for water to collect at the top before filtering into the compost.

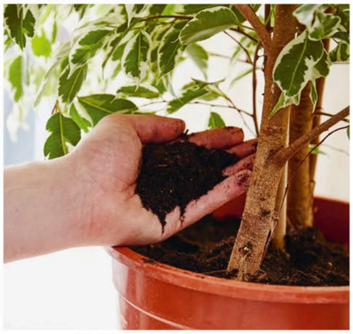
> *"A root-bound plant will have tightly packed roots that are growing through its pot's drainage holes."*

4 Fill in around the roots with more compost, pressing it down gently to remove any air gaps. Do not bury the stems (or aerial roots, if it has any); it should be at the same depth as it was in its original pot. Water gently, taking care to keep the leaves dry.

CARING FOR LARGE PLANTS

If you have a large tree or shrub that you want to keep at the same size, try tipping it out of its container and lightly trimming off the roots around the sides, then return it to the same pot with fresh compost. Larger plants can also be kept in the same pot year after year if given a top dressing of fresh compost and fertilizer each spring – follow the steps to keep yours in good health.

1 Remove the top layer of compost, ensuring you do not damage the roots. Apply a slow-release granular fertilizer at the recommended rate (see p189).



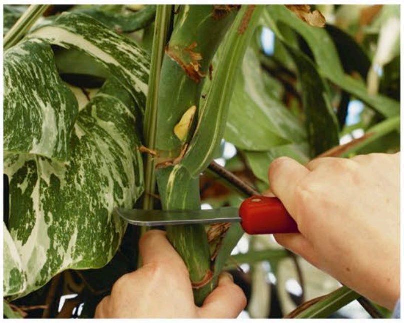
2 Add fresh compost to the same level as it was originally, patting it down to remove any air gaps. Water well to settle the new compost around the roots.

KEEPING YOUR PLANTS IN SHAPE

If your plant has lost its shape, is threatening to outgrow its space, or has areas of dead or diseased growth, it needs a trim. Regular pruning can also encourage more flowers to form and make plants bushier, so follow these simple pruning techniques to keep your plants neat and in good health.

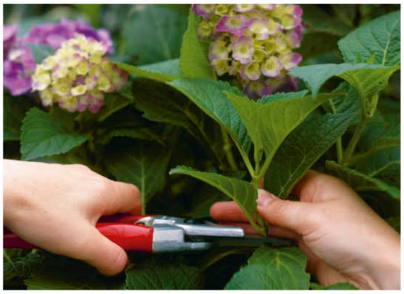
WHY PRUNE?

Keep a large plant compact
Removing or reducing long stems will help keep a plant's size in check, but pruning too frequently can actually stimulate growth, so cut it back just once or twice a year.



Remove dead or diseased parts
Cut out areas of the plant that look dead or diseased, and disinfect tools after use. Also remove stems that are rubbing against each other, which may cause abrasions.

Make a plant bushier
Removing the tips of a stem releases a chemical that stimulates the growth of more side-shoots lower down, and bushier growth. Use secateurs or your fingers to nip out the tips.



Encourage more flowers
Deadhead your plants by taking out the old flowering stems after the blooms have faded. This diverts the plant's energy from making seeds into producing more flowers.

WHAT TO PRUNE

1 **Dead, broken** or cracked stems

2 **Diseased stems** or any that are discoloured or marked

3 **Stems that are rubbing** against one another

4 **Brown or discoloured** leaves

5 **Overly long stems** that create a lopsided shape

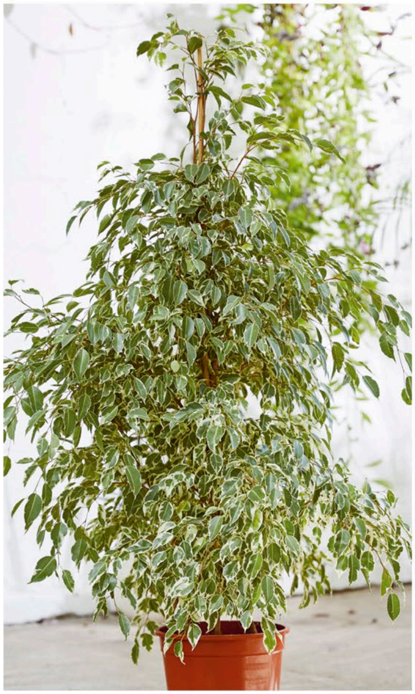
6 **Tips of stems**, to encourage bushy growth

7 **Leading stem(s)** at the top of the plant, to prevent it from growing too tall

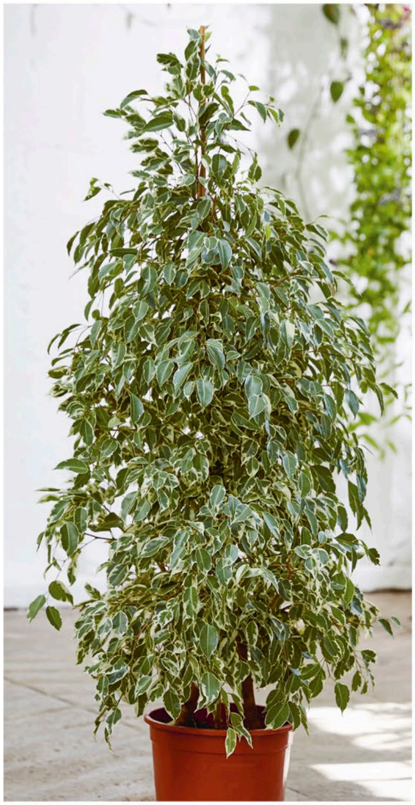
8 **Old flowering stems**, to encourage reflowering

9 **Stems of plain-coloured leaves** on variegated plants

BEFORE



AFTER



HOW TO PRUNE

While you can cut back unhealthy growth at any time of year, most plants are best pruned during early spring, before they start a period of rapid growth; check the Plant Profiles chapter to confirm your plant's pruning needs (pp100–75). Always check the plant before you begin so that you know which stems you will need to remove.

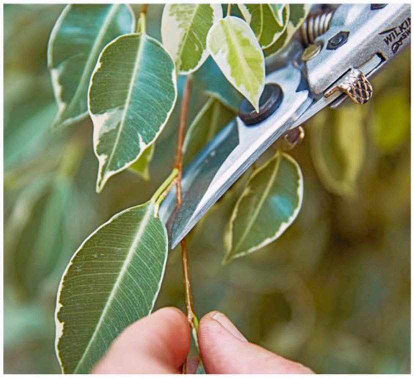
WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANTS

- Misshapen or large plant that has outgrown its space

TOOLS

- Sharp, clean secateurs
- Household disinfectant



1 When pruning, use sharp secateurs to cut just above a leaf stem, node (bump on the stem where new growth will develop), or side-stem, where it meets the main stem. To take out a whole stem, remove it at the base.

2 Remove any dead, damaged, or diseased stems, cutting them back to healthy growth. Also cut out stems that are rubbing against one another. On variegated plants, remove any stems of plain, solid-coloured leaves.

3 Once unhealthy growth is removed, reassess the plant's shape and cut away stems that are creating an awkward or lopsided shape. If there are gaps in the outline, prune the stem tips around them to encourage bushier growth.

4 If your plant is as tall as you want it to be, take out the leading stem to prevent further growth. When you have finished pruning your plant, clean your tools with household disinfectant, rinse them under the tap, and dry well.

HOW TO MAKE AN ORCHID REFLOWER

Orchids are usually bought while flowering, and can bloom for many weeks if well cared for. When their flowers do eventually fade and die, encourage them to bloom again after a period of rest by following these simple steps.

BLOOMING HEALTH

The care needed to encourage an orchid to reflower will also keep your plant healthy, as you are offering the optimum conditions for it to thrive. A healthy orchid can live for decades, and bloom every 8 to 12 months.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANT

- Mature orchid with fading flowers

OTHER MATERIALS

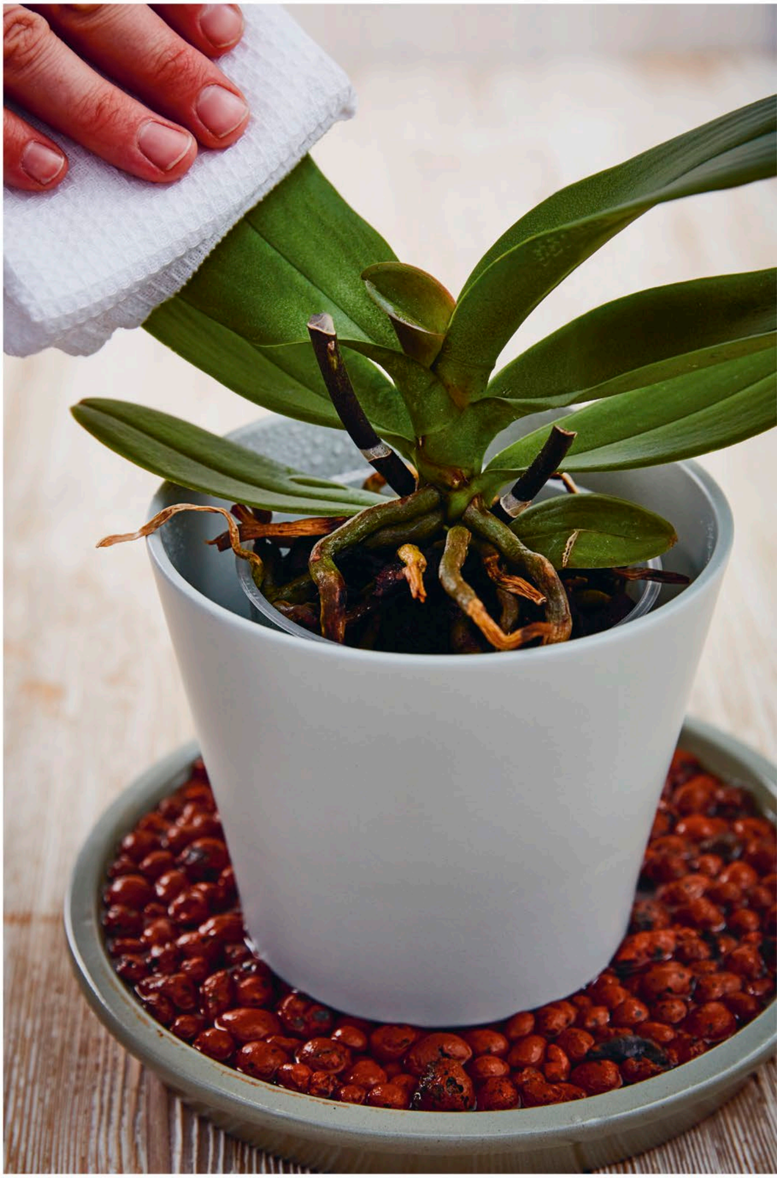
- Pot one size larger than the original with drainage holes in the bottom (optional)
- Compost to suit the plant (see Plant Profiles, pp110–15)

TOOLS

- Secateurs
- Soft cloth
- Watering can
- Mister spray or tray of damp pebbles
- Suitable fertilizer

1 Cut back the flowering stems to just above the second pale horizontal band. This allows the plant to put all its energy into making new leaves, rather than seed, which will supply energy for the next set of flowers.

2 Ensure the plant receives plenty of light, as too little sun will inhibit flower formation. Bring it closer to a window during winter, when the light is weaker, and dust the leaves every week or two to maximize the amount of light they can absorb. Remember to move the plant back out of direct midday sun during summer.



3 Repot the plant if it is tightly root-bound (see pp192–93). Use a pot just one size larger than the original, as most orchids prefer slightly cramped roots.

4 Keep your plant hydrated as necessary, watering less frequently during winter. Mist the leaves and aerial roots every day or two with rainwater or distilled water, or set on a tray of damp pebbles (see p187).

5 Feed the plant using a specialist orchid or balanced liquid fertilizer, applying the correct dosage for your plant (see pp188–89). During winter, either feed the plant less or do not feed it at all, depending on its particular needs.

6 Check your plant's temperature needs, including if it requires a marked drop at night. After 9–12 months (depending on the type of orchid; see pp110–15), move it to a cooler room to encourage buds to form, then bring it back into the warmth to bloom.

KNOW YOUR ORCHID'S NEEDS

Each type of orchid requires slightly different conditions to thrive and reflower, so check yours in the Orchids section of the Plant Profile chapter (see pp110–15) and tailor your care accordingly.

1 **Take seasonal variations** into consideration. Some orchids from cool, humid forests like lower temperatures, while others, such as moth orchids, flower well in warmer conditions.

2 **Look out for orchids** that need a marked difference between day and night temperatures to form flowers; *Cattleya*, *Cymbidium*, *Dendrobium nobile*, and *Vanda* all fall into this category.

3 **Check if your plant** needs a high-potash fertilizer instead of a specialist orchid fertilizer to flower.

4 **Be patient.** While moth orchids could reflower after a dormancy of just 8 months, most orchids will only bloom once a year.

HOW TO GROW BULBS INDOORS

Plant bulbs in autumn for beautiful floral house plant displays in winter and early spring. In cooler countries, tender bulbs, such as amaryllis, should be grown indoors, while hardy outdoor types can be "forced" to flower earlier inside by growing them in a cool spot, then moving them to a warmer room to bloom.

GROWING TENDER BULBS

Amaryllis bulbs (available from late autumn to midwinter) are tender and will die in frosty conditions outside, but they can be planted indoors where, with a little care, they will grow into beautiful house plants.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANTS

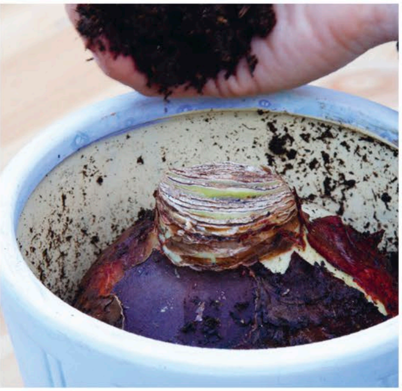
- Amaryllis bulb

OTHER MATERIALS

- Pot with drainage holes, slightly wider and about one and a half times as deep as the bulb
- Bulb fibre (specially formulated compost for growing bulbs) or multipurpose compost

TOOLS

- Watering can



1 Soak the bulb for a few hours. Set the bulb on a layer of bulb fibre, then fill in around it with more fibre, leaving up to two-thirds of the bulb showing above the surface.

2 Water well and leave to drain. Stand the pot in a bright, warm place. Water sparingly until shoots appear; then keep the compost consistently moist.

3 Turn the pot every day so that stems grow evenly. Move to a cooler room where flower buds will appear 6–8 weeks after planting, and stake the tall stems, if necessary. After blooming, feed the plant weekly with a balanced liquid fertilizer until the leaves die down. Keep in a cool, bright position, and do not feed or water when dormant, from late summer to mid-autumn.

GROWING HARDY BULBS

Outdoor bulbs are often "forced" to bloom earlier indoors than they would normally develop outside in the cold. Suitable bulbs include scented hyacinths (shown here) and grape hyacinths; daffodils and lilies of the valley require slightly different forcing methods (see below). Some bulbs, including hyacinths and paperwhite daffodils, will be labelled "prepared". These have been chilled to imitate a winter season, which they need to go through before flowering, and will bloom in winter, rather than spring. Other bulbs do not require this treatment to flower earlier indoors, but may not bloom until late winter.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANTS

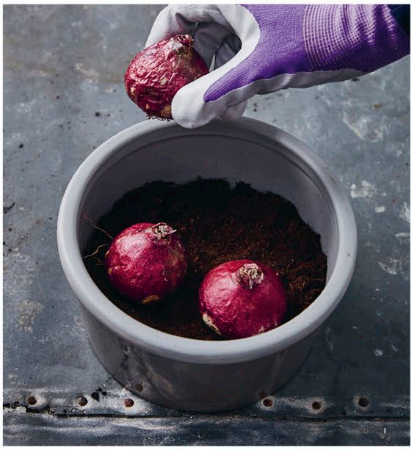
- Prepared hyacinth bulbs or unprepared grape hyacinth bulbs

OTHER MATERIALS

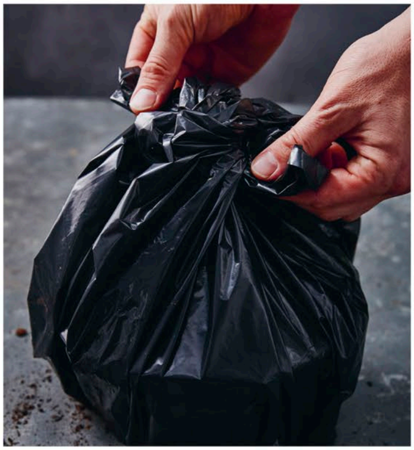
- Wide pot with drainage holes
- Bulb fibre

TOOLS

- Gloves
- Black plastic bag
- Watering can with a rose attachment



1 Place a layer of bulb fibre in a pot. Water the fibre and leave to drain. Wearing gloves (the bulbs can cause skin irritation), space the bulbs evenly on the fibre, making sure the pointed ends face up.



2 Fill in around the bulbs with fibre so the tips are just above the surface. Leave a 1cm (½in) gap between the fibre and top of the pot. Place the pot in a black plastic bag and set in a cool dark place.

3 Check every week and water lightly if the bulb fibre is dry. When shoots are 5cm (2in) tall (usually 6–10 weeks later), remove the bag and bring the pot indoors into a cool room out of direct sun. Stand in a slightly warmer spot to flower.

FORCING DAFFODILS AND LILIES OF THE VALLEY

To force daffodil bulbs, follow Steps 1 and 2 above, but cover the bulbs with a thin layer of compost. Set in a cool room below 10°C (50°F) for 6–12 weeks in a bright spot out of direct sun, then in a warmer area to flower. The best scented daffodils for forcing are tender paperwhites, which flower within 12 weeks.

Grow lilies of the valley from rhizomes, known as "pips", which are sold in winter with the roots already growing. Soak the pips for 2 hours, then plant in soil-based compost in tall, deep pots with drainage holes, so the top of the pips are just below the surface. Water and leave in a cool room in light shade, out from direct sun. Flowers will appear 3-5 weeks later.

HOW TO PROPAGATE PLANTS

Filling your home with the plants you love can be expensive, but many are easy to propagate, giving you lots of new plants from your original purchase. Use the guide below to decide which method suits your plants best; many can be propagated from cuttings, while others are better grown from divisions, offsets, or seed.

WHICH PROPAGATION METHOD SHOULD I USE?

The stem cutting method suits most soft-stemmed plants; woodier stems can also be used, but may take longer to root. **(pp200-01)**

The leaf cutting method is most effective for begonias, Cape primroses, snake plants, and succulents. **(pp202-03)**

The water method will work for most house plants, although woodier-stemmed plants may take longer to root. **(p204)**

The division method can be used on plants with fibrous root systems that throw up new shoots next to the parent plant. **(p205)**

The offset method suits plants which produce "baby" offsets, such as bromeliads and spider plants. **(pp206-07)**

The seed method is most often used to grow annual plants; perennials can be sown too, but may take longer to mature. **(pp208-09)**

PROPAGATE FROM STEM CUTTINGS

One of the easiest ways to make new plants, this method is suitable for most soft-stemmed house plants. Take your cuttings in spring or early summer, when the plant is growing quickly, and use young, pliable stems, rather than older, woodier growth, which may take longer to root. Many plants, including this silver inch plant, will produce rooted cuttings in 6–8 weeks.

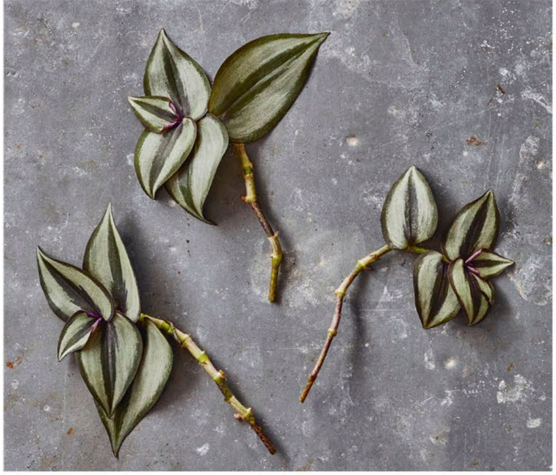
WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANT
- Mature plant with healthy young stems

OTHER MATERIALS
- Hormone rooting powder (optional)
- Small plastic pots or seed tray
- Cuttings compost
- Multipurpose compost

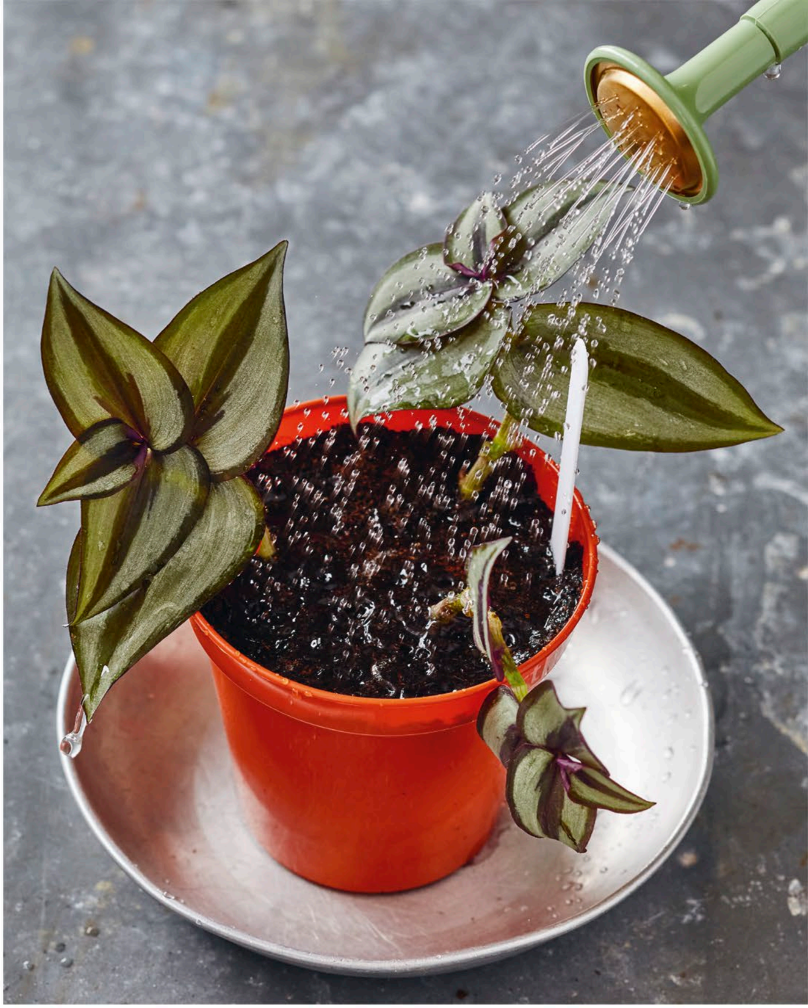
TOOLS
- Secateurs or sharp clean knife
- Dibber
- Small watering can fitted with a rose attachment
- Plastic bag and rubber band or clear seed tray or pot lid

1 In spring or early summer, select a non-flowering stem from a healthy plant. Using sharp secateurs, cut off a 10–15cm (4–6in) section from the tip, just below a leaf joint.

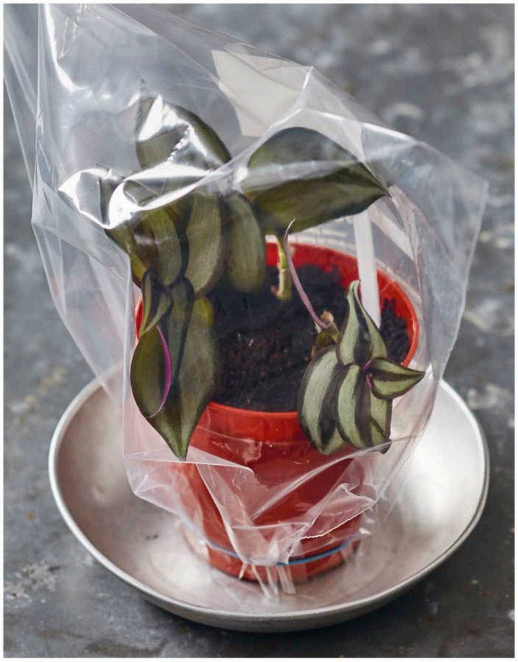


2 Remove the lower 2–3 leaves (or sets of leaves, if they are opposite each other). Take a few cuttings using this method, making sure you leave plenty of stems on the parent plant.

3 Dip the end of each cutting into hormone rooting powder. This is an optional step, as most stems will produce roots without it, but they may take longer.



4 Fill a small plastic pot or seed tray with cuttings compost. With a dibber, make a hole in the compost. Place the cutting into the hole and firm around it gently.



5 Insert up to 3 cuttings per pot, or plant 6 in a small seed tray. Settle the compost around the stems by watering lightly with a watering can fitted with a rose attachment.

6 Cover the pot with a plastic bag secured with a rubber band or a tray lid. Keep the compost moist, but not wet. Roots will develop over about 6–8 weeks. When new shoots appear, transplant the cuttings into small pots of multipurpose compost. Set in a bright spot out of direct sun to grow on.

PROPAGATE FROM LEAF CUTTINGS

It may seem unlikely that a leaf can produce roots, but many plants will perform this trick. Begonias, like the Rex begonia shown here, are the most frequently used for leaf cuttings, but you can also try Cape primroses, the snake plant, and succulents, such as *Kalanchoe* and *Echeveria*. These other plants require slightly different methods (see opposite).

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANT

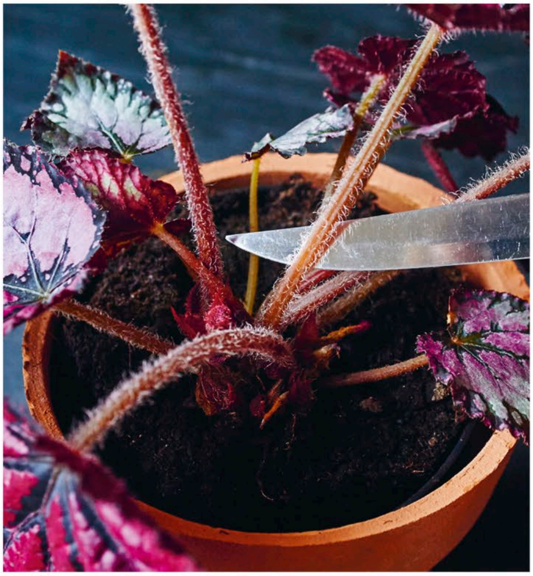
- Mature plant with large healthy leaves

OTHER MATERIALS

- Cuttings compost
- Perlite

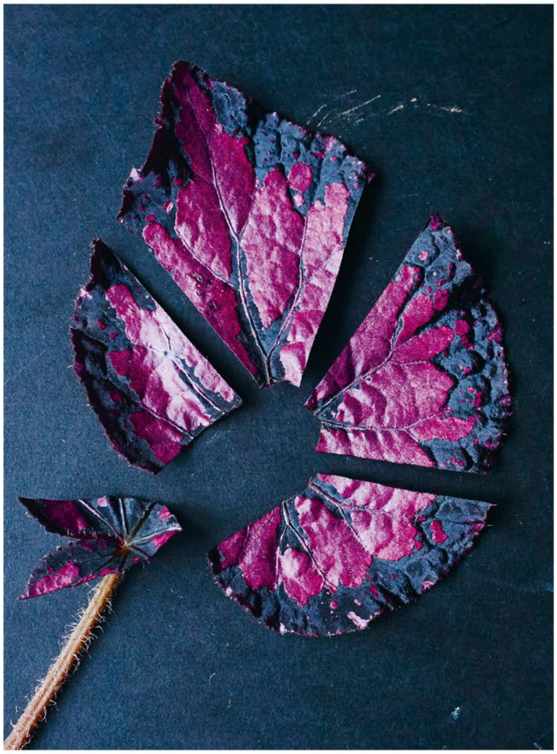
TOOLS

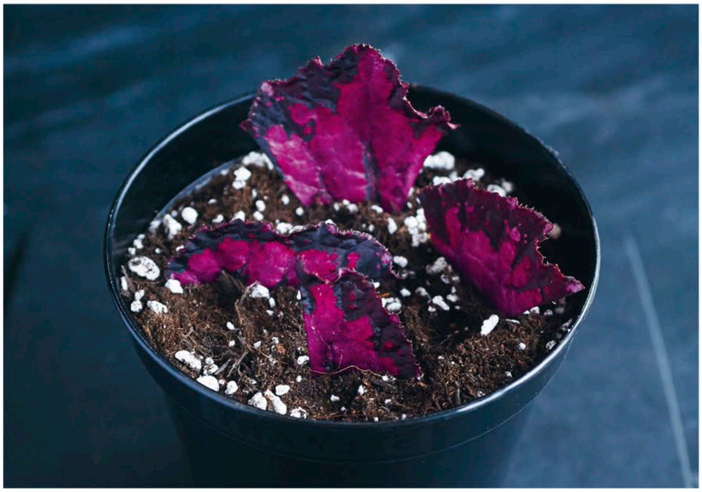
- Sharp knife or secateurs
- Cutting board
- 12cm (5in) plastic pots or small seed tray
- Clear polythene bags and rubber bands
- Small watering can with a rose attachment
- Small pots
- Spoon
- Multipurpose compost



1 Select a healthy mature plant with plenty of large leaves. Water it well about 30 minutes before taking your cuttings.

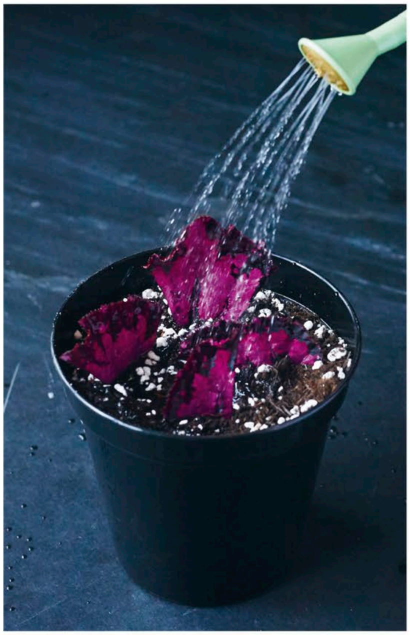
2 Select a large leaf and, using a sharp knife, remove it at the base of the leaf stem. Place on a clean cutting board.





3 Cut out a small circular section around the stem and discard. Divide the leaf into sections about 2cm (¾in) long, each with veins running through them (veins may be more visible on the reverse).

4 Fill a small pot or seed tray with cuttings compost and a handful of perlite. Press down gently to remove any air pockets. Carefully push the leaf segments in, so they are standing up with the veins in contact with the compost.



5 Using a small can fitted with rose attachment, water the cuttings to help to settle the compost around them. Ensure excess water drains away, or the cuttings could rot.

6 Seal the pot with a plastic bag secured with a rubber band and leave in a warm area out of direct sun. Cuttings take about 6–8 weeks to form new leaves and roots. When 2–4 leaves emerge, use a spoon to remove each cutting, keeping the roots intact, and transfer into small pots of multipurpose compost. Water well, and set in a warm, bright spot out of direct sun to grow on.

LEAF CUTTING METHODS FOR OTHER PLANTS

Cape primrose leaves should be cut either side of the midrib vein. Discard the midrib, and insert each side of the leaf into cuttings compost with the cut side down. Then follow steps 4 and 5.

Snake plants can be propagated by cutting a young, healthy leaf horizontally into 5cm (2in) sections. Take each of the sections and plant the edge that was closest to the base of the original leaf into cuttings compost. Then follow steps 4 and 5.

Succulent leaves should be kept whole and set aside for 24–48 hours until the cut ends dry out. Insert these ends into pots filled with a 2:1 mix of cactus compost and sand, then add some grit on top. Do not cover the cuttings. When 2–4 new leaves have emerged, plant them into small pots of cactus compost, water lightly, and place in a bright position to grow on.

PROPAGATE WITH WATER

Quick and easy to do, this is a great propagation method for beginners. It is also fun for children, as they can watch the roots developing on the cut stems day by day. A large number of house plants can be increased in this way, especially those with soft, pliable stems, such as the African violet (used here), devil's ivy, and species of *Peperomia* and *Pilea*.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANT

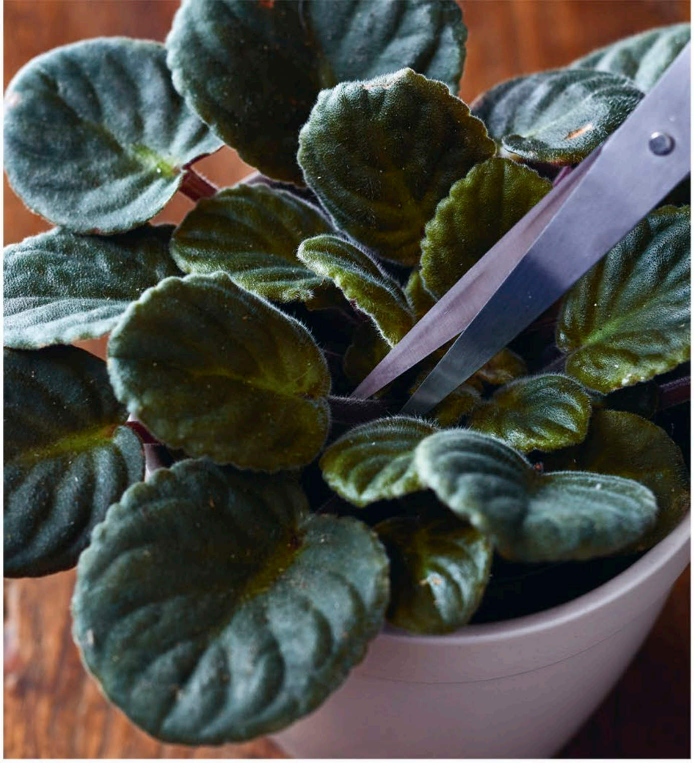
- Mature healthy plant

OTHER MATERIALS

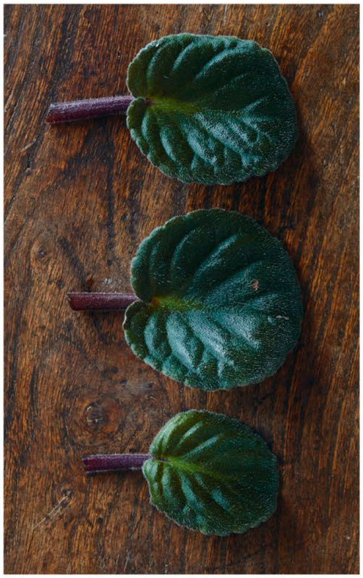
- Multipurpose compost

TOOLS

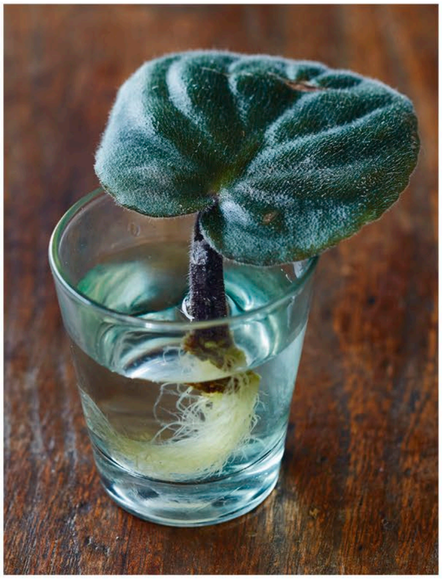
- Scissors, sharp clean knife, or secateurs
- Glass or jar
- Small pots with drainage holes



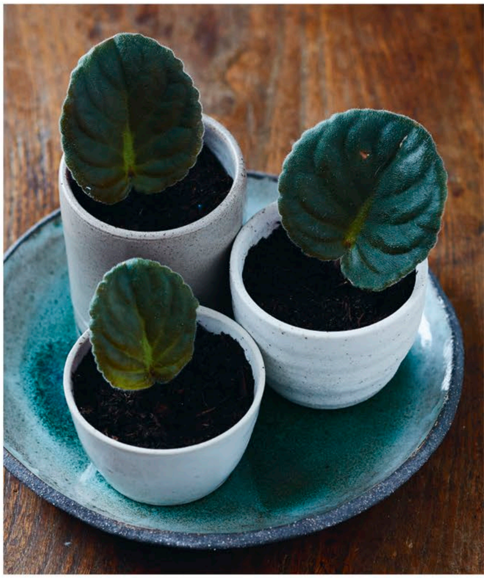
1 Choose a healthy non-flowering stem and remove it at the base with a knife, scissors or secateurs. Cut the stem below a node (bump on the stem) if there is one.



2 Ensure the leaf has a clear portion of stem at least 5cm (2in) long. If the stem has a number of leaves growing from it, remove the bottom sets to leave the lower stem clear.



3 Place the cutting in a glass of water, ensuring the leaf or leaves are not submerged; rest them on the sides. After a few weeks, roots will grow from the base of the stem.



4 When a good root system has developed in the water, transplant each cutting into a small pot of multipurpose compost. Grow on in a bright area out of direct sunlight.

PROPAGATE BY DIVIDING PLANTS

Some plant varieties produce a network of fibrous roots that throw up new stems around the sides of the plant. If you see you see new shoots growing around the base of a mature ("parent") plant, use this simple method to divide it up to make two or three new ones. Here, we have divided a snake plant; other suitable plants that are easy to divide include cast iron plants, asparagus ferns, Boston ferns, peace lilies, and most *Goeppertia*.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANT

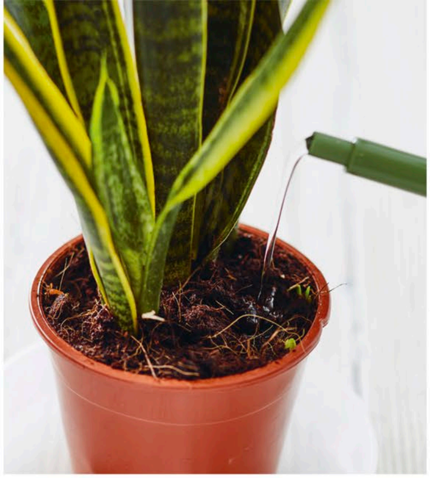
- Mature healthy plant with shoots growing around the sides

OTHER MATERIALS

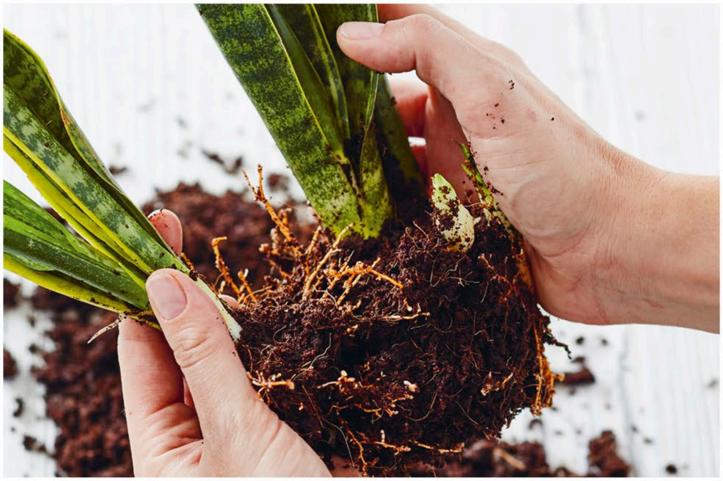
- Multipurpose compost

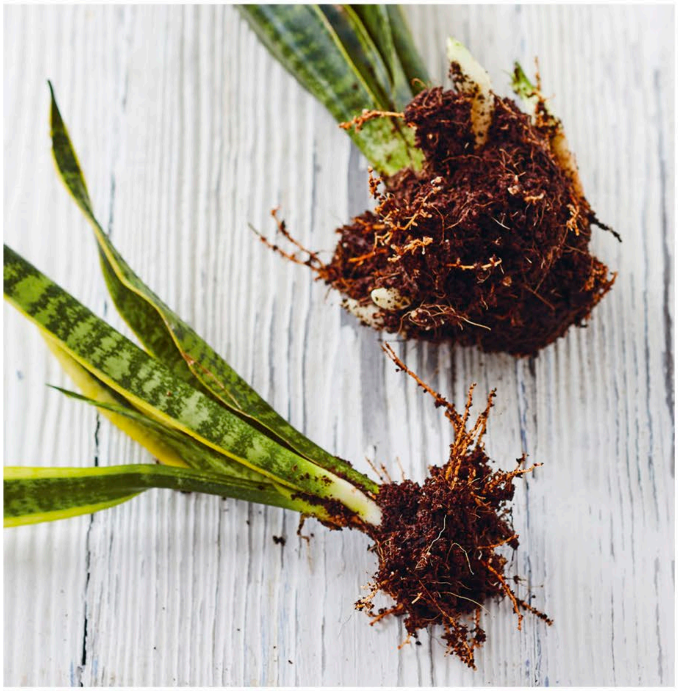
TOOLS

- Watering can
- Sharp, clean knife
- Plastic pots that match the size of the root balls



1 Water the plant about an hour before removing it from its plastic pot. Using your fingers, remove some of the compost from the root ball, so you can see more clearly where the stems are attached to the roots.





2 If possible, tease apart the new shoots from the parent plant, ensuring that plenty of roots remain attached to both sections.

3 If the root ball is too congested, use a sharp knife to cut it into sections, ensuring that the stems all have some roots (severing a few roots is fine).

4 Fill new pots with multipurpose compost. Plant the divisions in the pots, taking care not to damage the roots. Set them at the same level they were growing at in their original pot; do not bury the stems. Water, and set in a warm, bright spot out of direct sun.

PROPAGATE FROM OFFSETS

Offsets are young plantlets (known as "pups") that grow from the parent plant. Some plants produce offsets that replace the parent when it dies after flowering; this is the case for all bromeliads (shown here), as well as some cacti and succulents. Mature spider plants, meanwhile, regularly produce offsets from long cascading stems, which can be potted up to create new plants (see opposite).

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANT

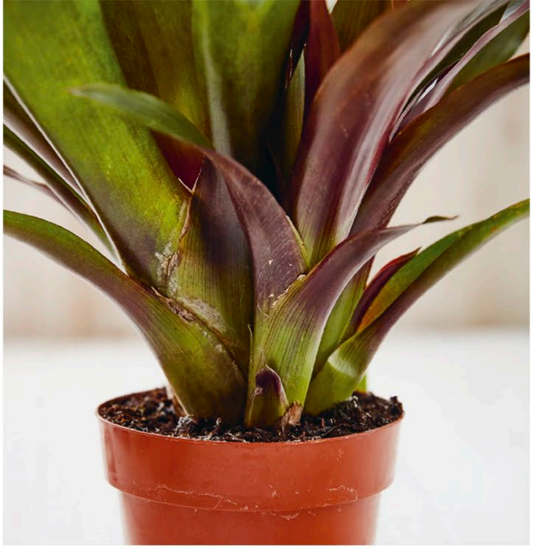
- Mature, flowering bromeliad with offsets growing around the base

OTHER MATERIALS

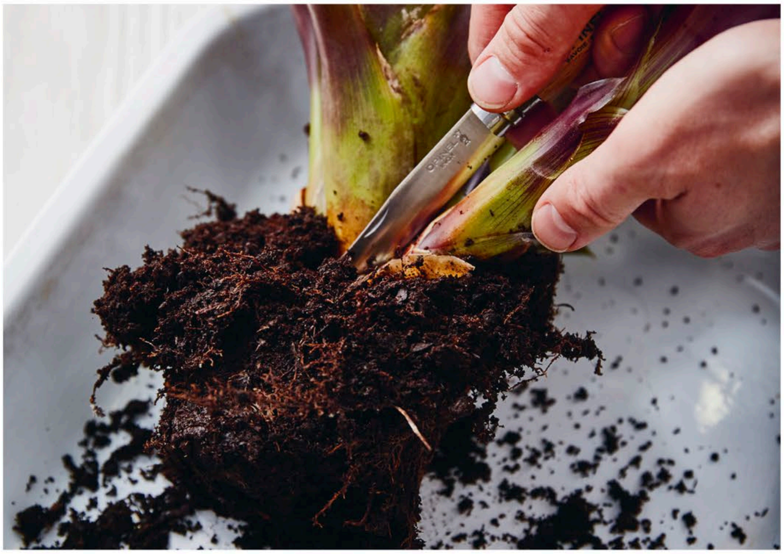
- Hormone rooting powder
- Cactus compost (or a 2:1 mix of soil-based compost and sand)
- Perlite

TOOLS

- Sharp clean knife
- Soft clean brush
- 10cm (4in) plastic pots
- Short stick for staking
- Small watering can with a rose attachment

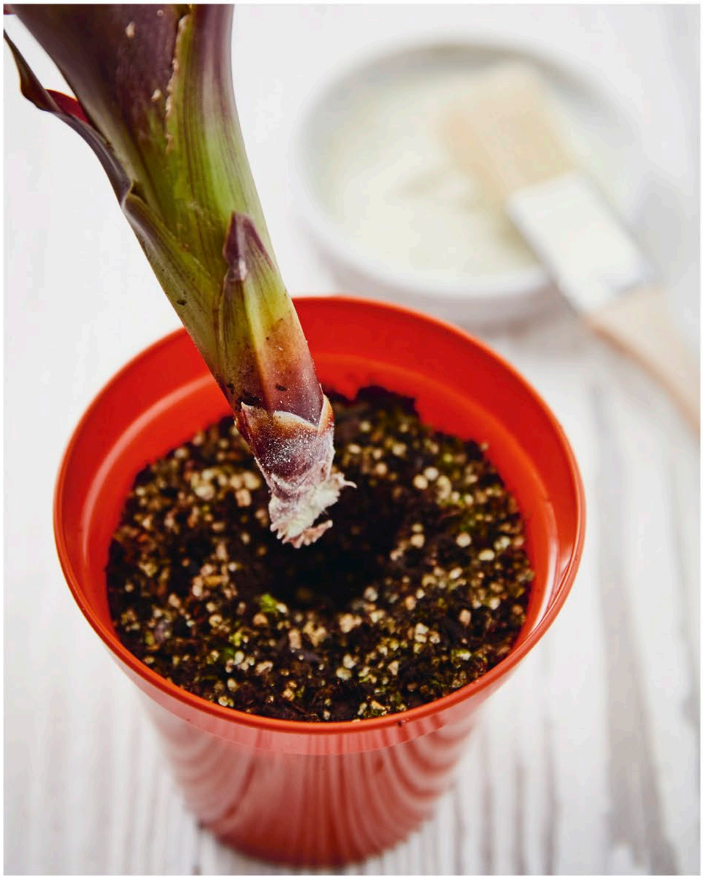


1 Check that the offsets around the base of the plant are between one-third and one-half of the size of the parent before removing them. These will root more successfully than younger offsets.

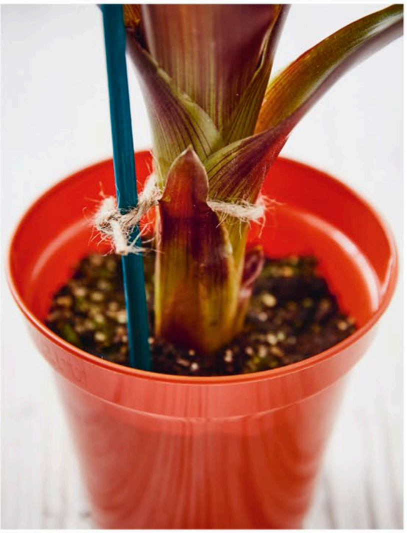


2 Carefully remove the plant from its pot. With a sharp knife, cut off the offset close to the parent. Try not to damage the parent plant; it can be repotted if it has not died back, as it may yet go on to produce more offsets.

3 If there is a papery leaf covering the end of the offset, pull this back to reveal the base and dust with hormone rooting powder. Do not worry if the base does not yet have roots; they are not essential for success at this stage, as the powder will encourage root growth.



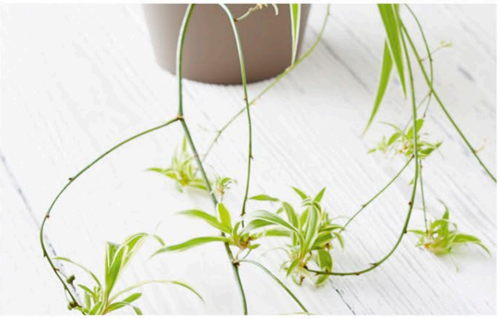
4 Fill a 10cm (4in) plastic pot with cactus compost mixed with a handful of perlite. Insert the base of the offset into the compost, taking care not to bury too much of the stem, which may rot. Water lightly to settle the compost around the offset.



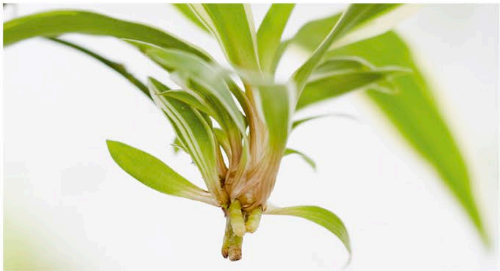
5 If the offset is too heavy to stand up on its own, stake it with a short stick. Set the pot in a bright position out of direct sun, and keep the compost moist, but not wet. Roots will develop after a few weeks. Repot when new shoots appear, following the advice for your bromeliad in the Plant Profiles chapter (see pp102–105). Offsets take 2–3 years to mature and flower.

POTTING UP “SPIDER” OFFSETS

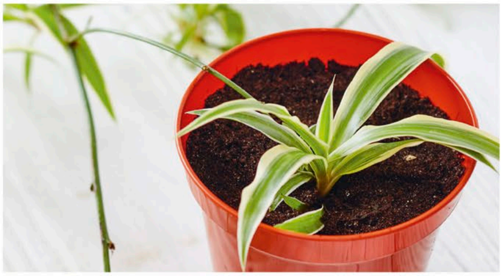
Spider plants are easy to propagate from the offsets (known as “spiders”, which give the plant its name). These grow at the ends of long stems that cascade down from the parent plant.



1 Wait until your plant has produced a few small leafy offsets at the tips of the cascading stems. Look for those that are healthy and have a few sets of leaves.



2 Select an offset with a tiny root growing from the base. Fill a small plastic pot with cuttings compost, and set the offset into the compost; do not bury it too deeply.



3 Do not cut the offset from its parent yet. Keep the compost moist, and wait for new shoots to appear. This is a sign that the offset has made its own root system, and you can then cut it free from the parent plant.

PROPAGATE FROM SEED

Raising plants from seed is easier than you may think, but be prepared to pamper the seedlings for a couple of months while they are developing into mature plants, as any periods of drought could kill them. Annual plants (which grow, flower, and die in the same year) are good choices for beginners, and include the Persian violet, busy lizzies, and coleus (shown here). Buy fresh seeds every year for the best results.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

PLANT

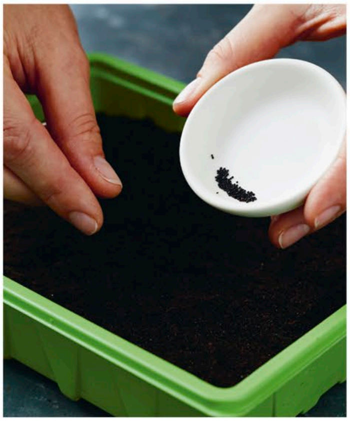
- Packet of house plant seeds

OTHER MATERIALS

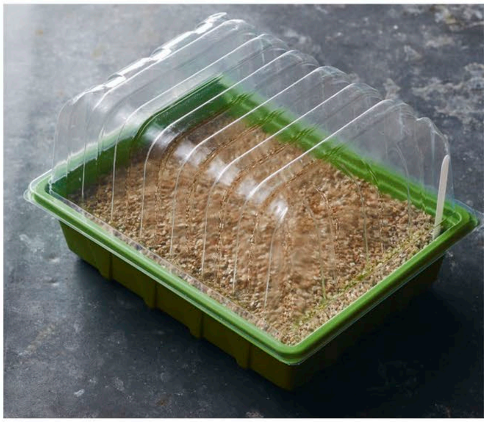
- Seed and cutting compost
- Vermiculite

TOOLS

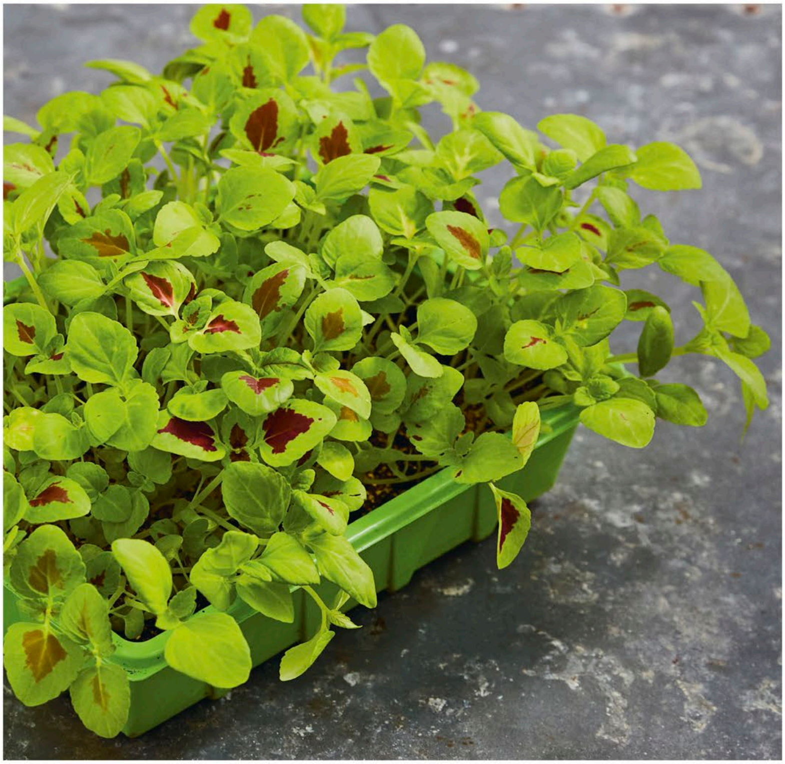
- Small seed tray with clear plastic lid
- Sieve, for compost (optional)
- Plant labels
- Small spoon
- Module seed tray or small plastic pots
- Watering can fitted with a rose attachment
- Larger pots
- Multipurpose compost



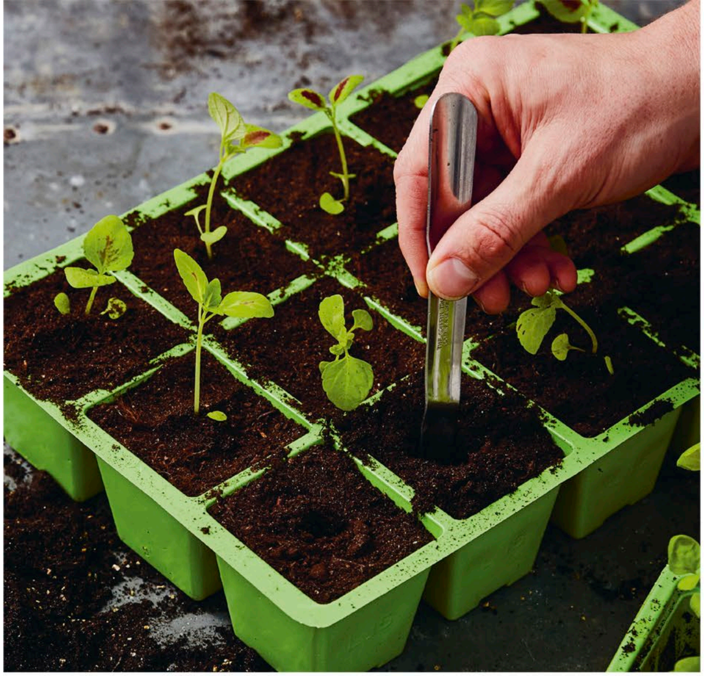
1 Almost fill a seed tray with damp seed compost. Press the upturned lid of the seed tray on top to create a flat surface and to remove any air gaps. Sow seeds evenly on the surface.



2 Cover the seeds with vermiculite or a very thin layer of sieved seed compost. Label, pop on the lid, and set in a bright area out of direct sun; the seeds need light to germinate.



3 Keep the compost moist, but not wet. Remove the lid as soon as the first leaves emerge, and leave the seedlings to grow on until they have formed 4–6 new leaves.



4 Fill a module seed tray or plastic pots with seed compost. Make a hole in the compost with the spoon, then use it to scoop out a seedling, keeping its roots intact. Hold it by its leaves and plant it into one of the modules.

5 Gently firm around the base of the seedling. Repeat until the whole tray is filled with seedlings, then water with a can fitted with a rose attachment. Keep the compost moist but not wet; overwatering may rot the seedlings.

6 Place the tray or pots of seedlings in a warm, bright area out of direct sun to grow on. Turn them every day or two so that the plants grow evenly and do not stretch towards the light and become tall and leggy.

7 When the seedlings are about 10–15cm (4–6in) tall, transplant them into larger pots of multipurpose compost. Nip out the stem tips to encourage bushier growth (see p198). They will soon grow into mature plants, ready to display.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH MY PLANT?

If your plant is not looking its best, this simple checklist may help you to determine the potential cause. Inspect the plant carefully for symptoms and try to identify the likely source of the problem, then take appropriate action. Most issues can be fixed with just a few care adjustments, so always try the simplest remedies first.

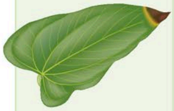
CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS

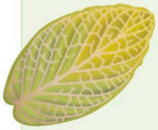
Once you've identified the most likely cause of your plant's ailment, turn to the following pages to find the solution:

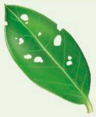
Care-based problems are usually the most likely cause of poor house plant health. **(pp212–13)**

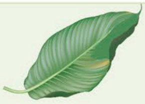
Diseases can also be a potential cause; familiarise yourself with the warning signs and learn how to treat them. **(pp214–15)**

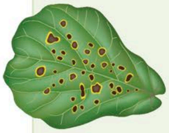
Pests are another possibility, so watch out for them and remove them if you spot any. **(pp216–19)**

PROBLEM	POSSIBLE CAUSE	SOLUTION
 BROWN LEAF TIPS	over- or underwatering	**check if the compost is too dry or saturated (see p213)**
	dry air (if the plant prefers high humidity)	**mist the plant or set on a tray of damp pebbles (see p187)**
	high temperatures/ too much sun	**move to a cooler area, and increase watering (see p213)**
	overfeeding	**feed at the exact recommended frequency and quantity (see p213)**

PROBLEM	POSSIBLE CAUSE	SOLUTION
 YELLOW OR REDDISH LEAVES	underfeeding	**feed at the exact recommended frequency and quantity (see p213)**
	over- or underwatering	**check if the compost is too dry or saturated (see p213)**
	cold draughts	**move to a warmer area (see p213)**
	natural shedding of leaves	**do nothing; the leaves of all plants turn yellow and fall from time to time**

PROBLEM	POSSIBLE CAUSE	SOLUTION
 HOLES IN LEAVES	Pest damage	**check leaves for insect pests (see pp216–19)**
	physical damage due to people or pets brushing past	**move to a more protected area**

PROBLEM	POSSIBLE CAUSE	SOLUTION
 CURLED LEAVES	high temperatures	**move to a cooler area, and increase watering (see p213)**
	pest damage	**check leaves for insect pests (see pp216–19)**

PROBLEM	POSSIBLE CAUSE	SOLUTION
 SPOTS ON LEAVES	dark brown spots: overwatering	check the compost is not saturated (see p213)
	dry patches: underwatering	water more frequently to keep the compost moist (see p213)
	pale spots: misting with hard water	use rainwater or distilled water to mist the plant
	disease or pest damage	check leaves for diseases and pests (see pp214–19)

PROBLEM	POSSIBLE CAUSE	SOLUTION
SUDDEN LEAF FALL 	environmental change due to repotting or new position	wait a few days; the plant should soon recover
	pest damage	inspect roots for insect pests (see pp216–19)

PROBLEM	POSSIBLE CAUSE	SOLUTION
 FLOWER BUDS FALL 	dry air (if the plant prefers high humidity)	mist the plant or set on a tray of damp pebbles (see p187)
	under- or overwatering	check if the compost is too dry or saturated (see p213)
	wrong temperature	check advice and move if too hot or too cold (see p213)
	Pest damage	check buds, stems and leaves for insect pests (see pp216–19)

PROBLEM	POSSIBLE CAUSE	SOLUTION
 WILTED LEAVES AND STEMS	over- or underwatering	check if the compost is too dry or saturated (see p213)
	root-bound	repot the plant into a container one or two sizes larger so roots can absorb water more easily
	high temperatures/ too much sun	move to a cooler area, and increase watering (see p213)
	pest damage	check the leaves and roots for insect pests (see pp216–19)

PROBLEM	POSSIBLE CAUSE	SOLUTION
FURRY GROWTH ON LEAVES AND STEMS	fungal diseases	identify the disease (pp214–15) and treat as suggested

PROBLEM	POSSIBLE CAUSE	SOLUTION
 NO FLOWERS	too little light	move into an area with more sun (see p212)
	over- or underfeeding	feed at the exact recommended frequency and quantity (see p213)
	dry air or compost	mist the plant if it likes high humidity and check if the compost is too dry (see p213)
	pot too big	repot to a smaller pot; some plants only flower when roots are restricted

DEALING WITH CARE-BASED PROBLEMS

Most house plant health issues are simply the result of incorrect care, and in most cases they are easily fixed. Once you have identified the most likely cause of the problems (see pp214–15), use this guide to find the best ways to bring it back to health.

CARE COMES FIRST

To keep your plant thriving, follow the care advice given in the Plant Profile chapter (see pp100–75), and the tips outlined here if it starts to show any signs of poor health. If problems persist a few days after you have taken action to rectifiy them, the cause may lie elsewhere. Return to pp210–11 to see if a disease or pest may be the cause, then follow the suggested solutions. Remember that plants will be more resilient to attacks if they are given the right care and conditions.

GOLDEN RULES FOR KEEPING YOUR PLANTS HEALTHY

1 Check the light, temperature, watering, and fertilizing needs of your plants in the Plant Profiles chapter (see pp100–75).

2 Plant in pots with drainage holes and water so that the compost does not become waterlogged.

3 Place your plant in the right amount of light for its needs.

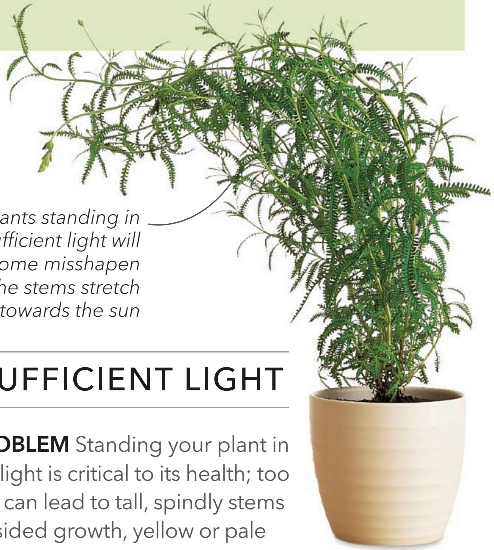
4 Stand the plant in the right temperature, away from heaters, and provide good ventilation.

5 Feed a plant according to its requirements – both over- and underfeeding can be harmful.

6 Remove fallen leaves or flowers from the compost, which may rot and lead to fungal disease.

7 Check the plant every few days for signs of pests or diseases.

8 Cut out any diseased plant parts and remove any pests promptly.



Plants standing in insufficient light will become misshapen as the stems stretch towards the sun

INSUFFICIENT LIGHT

THE PROBLEM Standing your plant in enough light is critical to its health; too little sun can lead to tall, spindly stems and lopsided growth, yellow or pale leaves, and few or no flowers.

THE SOLUTION Check that your plant is given the light it needs in the Plant Profiles chapter (see pp100–75). Prevent the stems reaching for the sun and growing tall and weak ("etiolated"), or lopsided, by turning the pot every few days.

TOO MUCH LIGHT

THE PROBLEM Even some sun-loving plants cannot tolerate the intense light of midsummer sun. Symptoms include brown leaf tips, brown upper leaf surfaces, and wilting.

THE SOLUTION Move your plant from a sunny window or room to an area in diffused light, or hang net curtains over windows.

TOO COLD

THE PROBLEM Cold draughts can cause the leaves to turn yellow or red and then fall off. Occasionally, leaves can also look deformed due to a drop in temperature halting normal growth.

THE SOLUTION Keep plants away from cold draughts, such as hallways, and remove them from cold windowsills, especially at night, in winter.

Move plants from cold windowsills during the winter months.

TOO WARM

THE PROBLEM High temperatures can make the compost dry out, dehydrating your plant, and may also reduce the humidity levels in the air. Symptoms can include brown leaf tips, curled leaves, wilting, falling flower buds, or no flowers.

THE SOLUTION Keep plants away from hot, direct sunlight in summer, and open windows or turn on the air conditioning to lower temperatures. Also water more frequently when temperatures rise to keep the compost moist (but not too wet – see right), and move plants away from heaters and radiators in winter.

UNDERWATERING

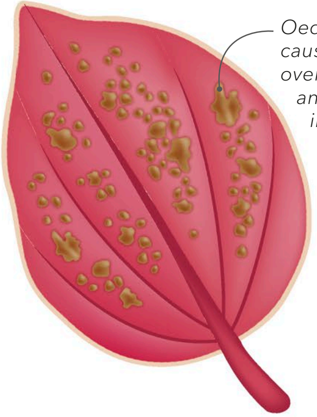
THE PROBLEM Compost that is too dry can lead to wilting, brown leaf tips, yellow or red leaves, curled leaves, and falling flower buds, or no flowers.

SOLVE IT Plants will recover quickly after dry compost is watered, and they should perk up after a day or two. Watering from below may be the best method if compost is very dry (see p184), but guard against overwatering.

OVERWATERING

THE PROBLEM The symptoms of underwatering (above) can also be a sign of overwatering, as the roots begin to rot due to the excess moisture, preventing them from taking up water. Overwatering can also cause fungal diseases (see pp214–15) and spots on the foliage, caused by a condition called "oedema", where water-soaked patches on the leaves rupture and turn corky.

THE SOLUTION Pour away excess water in the plant's decorative waterproof pot or saucer, and repot if its root ball is in a container with no drainage holes. Then leave the plant to dry out on a draining board or tray filled with dry gravel.

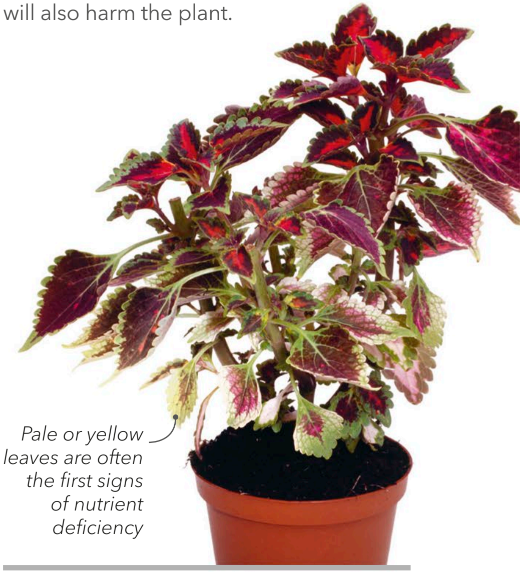


Oedema is caused by over-watering and results in corky patches on leaves

UNDERFEEDING

THE PROBLEM Tell-tale signs of an undernourished plant include pale leaves, yellow foliage, poor overall growth, and no or few flowers.

THE SOLUTION Feed your plants according to their care instructions in the Plant Profile chapter (pp100–75). Do not be tempted to overfeed, though, even if you think your plant is malnourished, as this could lead to reverse osmosis (see below), which will also harm the plant.



Pale or yellow leaves are often the first signs of nutrient deficiency

OVERFEEDING

THE PROBLEM Overfeeding can cause similar symptoms to underfeeding (above), since an excess of fertilizer can draw nutrients out of a plant's cells in a process known as "reverse osmosis". It can also cause brown leaf tips.

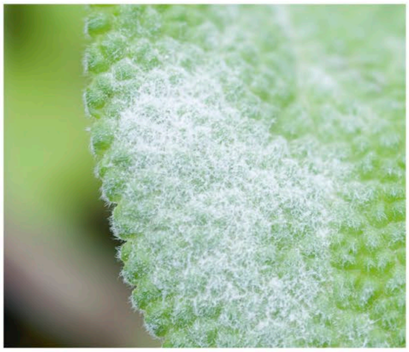
THE SOLUTION Flush the compost through with plenty of plain water; use rainwater or distilled water if that is what your plant prefers (see the Plant Profile chapter on pp100–75). Make sure that the plant pot has drainage holes so excess water and nutrients can escape easily.

DEALING WITH COMMON DISEASES

Even with the best care, plants can still succumb to disease. If this happens, isolate the plant to prevent the problem from spreading, identify the ailment, then take appropriate action as soon as possible.

PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE

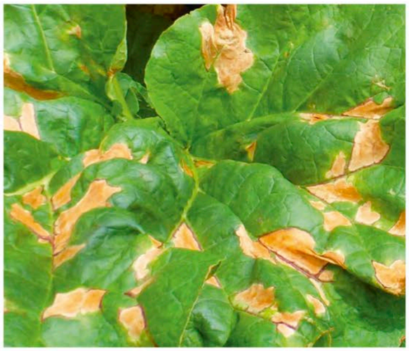
Among the most common causes of plant diseases are overwatering, underwatering and lack of ventilation, which allow rots and other fungi to develop, so follow the advice given on p213 to keep yours healthy. If your plant still succumbs to disease, ventilate the room if controlling it with a spray fungicide, and disinfect pots to prevent reinfection.



POWDERY MILDEW

THE PROBLEM This disease produces a white, powdery fungus on leaves, stems and flowers, and is often caused by lack of water and poor ventilation.

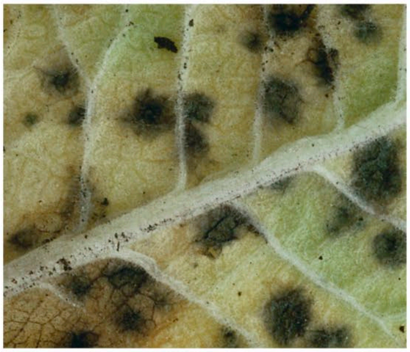
THE SOLUTION Check that your plant is not stressed due to underwatering, which increases the risk of infection. Remove affected parts as soon as you see them, and make sure the air is well ventilated. Apply a fungicide in severe cases.



DOWNY MILDEW

THE PROBLEM This fungal disease causes green, yellow, purple or brown blotches on the leaves, and a mould-like growth under the foliage. The leaves can also turn yellow and fall.

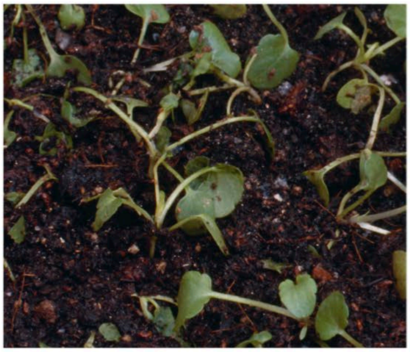
THE SOLUTION Remove affected parts, and bag and bin severely infected plants. Avoid wetting the leaves which can increase the likelihood of mildew developing. There is no chemical cure.



FUNGAL LEAF SPOT

THE PROBLEM Dark spots with yellow edges appear on the leaves, and the foliage may then fall off.

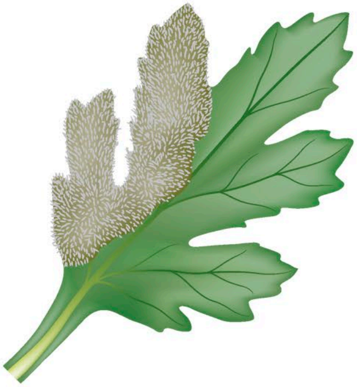
THE SOLUTION Remove affected leaves as soon as you see them, along with any foliage that has fallen onto the compost. Provide more ventilation around the plant to prevent reinfection, and treat persistent problems with a fungicide.



DAMPING OFF

THE PROBLEM This affects seedlings, where the ventilation is poor, or seeds have been sown too thickly. Seedlings collapse and quickly die, and a white fungal growth appears on the compost.

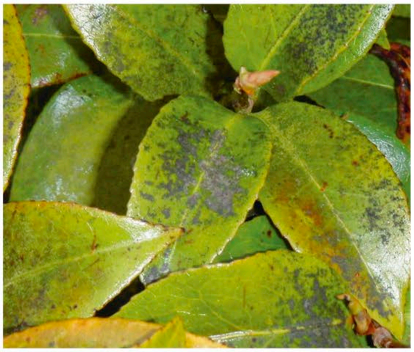
THE SOLUTION As soon as the seedlings emerge, remove any lid or plastic covering, so that air can circulate. There is no chemical cure.



GREY MOULD

THE PROBLEM The first sign of this fungal disease is usually a fuzzy grey-brown mould on the plant's stems and leaves, which soon leads to their decay.

THE SOLUTION Remove affected parts as soon as you see them, and provide more ventilation around the plant. Control with a fungicide as soon as you see the mould, or the plant may die.



SOOTY MOULD

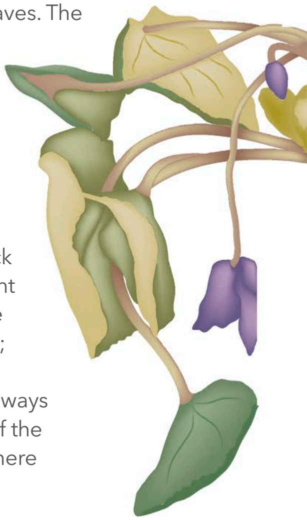
THE PROBLEM A black or dark brown fungal growth appears mainly on the leaves. It is caused by fungus growing on the sugar-rich honeydew produced by sap-sucking pests, such as aphids.

THE SOLUTION Remove the pests (see pp216–219) if possible, and wipe off the fungus with warm water. There is no chemical cure.

STEM AND CROWN ROT

THE PROBLEM This fungal disease turns stems from brown to black around the compost line and this discolouration can then travel up the plant to the leaves. The plant will begin to show signs of wilting and then start to decay.

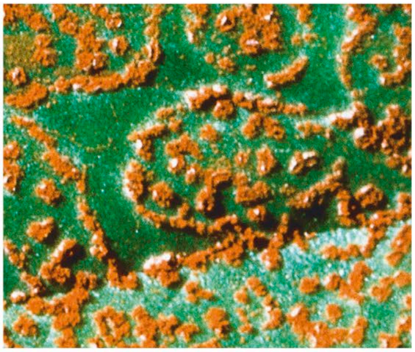
THE SOLUTION Once symptoms show, it may be too late to halt the dieback of the plant. To prevent this rot, check that the compost is not soggy; plant in a pot with drainage holes and always tip excess water out of the outer pot or saucer. There is no chemical cure.



ROOT ROT

THE PROBLEM Often unnoticed until the plant wilts and will not recover after watering, this fungus is caused by prolonged drought or overwatering. The roots look dark brown or black, then rot.

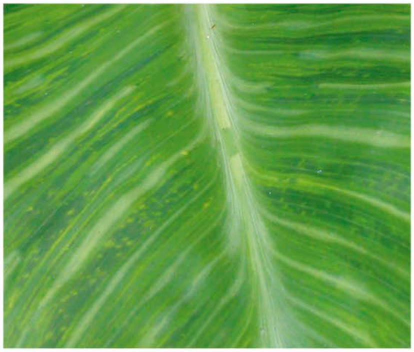
THE SOLUTION Bag up and bin affected plants, as there are no chemical cures for this rot. Prevent it happening again by ensuring your plants' compost is not too wet or dry.



RUST

THE PROBLEM The rust-coloured pustules caused by this fungal disease appear mainly on the undersides of leaves, which then turn yellow and die. Rust mostly affects garden plants, but can infect pelargoniums grown indoors.

THE SOLUTION Avoid over-feeding, which increases the risk of infection. Remove affected leaves as soon as you see them. There is no chemical cure.



VIRUS

THE PROBLEM Pale green or yellow spots, streaks, mosaic patterns, or rings appear on the leaves, and overall growth may be stunted or distorted. The flowers may also have white or pale streaks.

THE SOLUTION Bag up and bin infected plants promptly to prevent spread. Do not use a plant with a suspected virus for propagatation. There is no chemical cure.

DEALING WITH COMMON PESTS

They may be small but, given the chance, many pests can quickly ruin your precious house plants. By checking regularly for pests, you can take action to remove them before they infest your plants, which will make control more difficult.

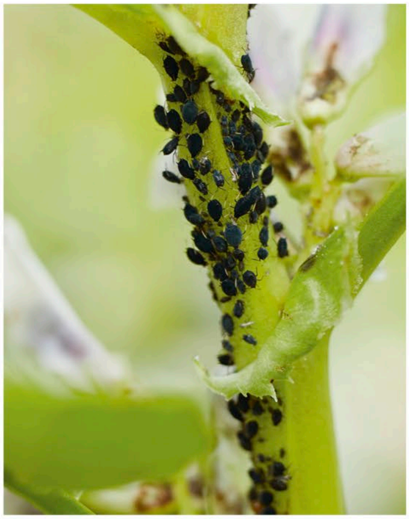
KEEP UNWELCOME VISITORS AT BAY

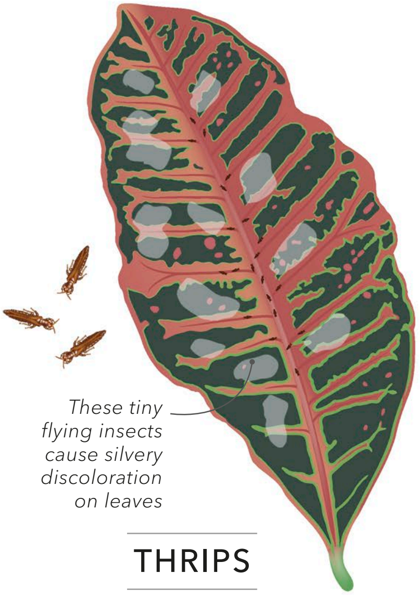
Plant pests can enter your home on new house plants that you have bought in, so when buying, always check for them on the leaves, stems, and flowers, and look for insects crawling on the compost. Open windows and doors also offer pests a route inside, but by giving your plants a health check every week, you should be able to keep most under control by simply picking them off. A few, such as spider mite, are difficult to see with the naked eye, so look out for the tell-tale symptoms and take the necessary action to keep your plants pest-free.

APHIDS

THE PROBLEM Also known as green- or blackfly), these common sap-sucking insects can grow to up to 7mm (¼in) long. They cause distorted or curled leaves, stunted flower buds, and poor overall growth. Aphids also excrete a sticky honeydew, which can lead to the growth of sooty moulds (see p215).

THE SOLUTION Look for aphids on flower buds, stems (below) and under the leaves. To remove them, wear plastic gloves and gently squeeze them, then wipe them off. For larger infestations, try a dilute soap-based solution or pesticide.





These tiny flying insects cause silvery discoloration on leaves

THRIPS

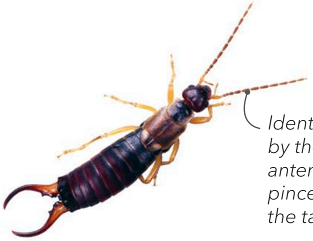
THE PROBLEM Also known as thunder flies, these minute, winged, sap-sucking insects are only 2mm (1⁄16in) long and difficult to see unless they are flying around. Their nymphs (juveniles) are wingless. Damage results in dull green leaves with a silvery discoloration and tiny black dots on the upper surfaces. They also cause distorted shoots and flower buds, while the flowers may have white markings and lose their colour, or the buds may fail to open.

THE SOLUTION Use sticky traps to help to ensnare these tiny insects. Pesticides that control thrips are also available.

EARWIGS

THE PROBLEM These nocturnal brown insects are up to 15mm (½in) long, and have distinctive pincers on their rear ends. They eat flowers and leaves, reducing the latter to a skeleton of veins. While they are not a common house plant pest, they may attack some of the flowering types.

THE SOLUTION Inspect your plants at night, and remove any insects you find. Also check inside ornamental containers or pots nearby, where they may be hiding during the day.

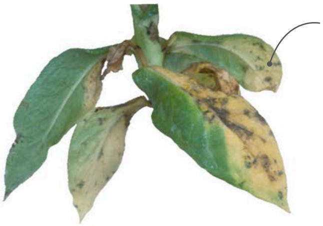


Identify earwigs by their long antennae and pincers at the tail end

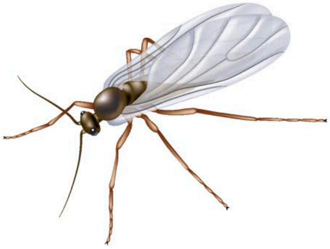
STEM AND BULB EELWORMS

THE PROBLEM These microscopic, worm-like nematodes are not visible to the naked eye, yet they can cause severe damage, feeding on the plant's fluids and leading to distorted leaves, often with yellow blotches. The stem tips and buds may also turn black and die. Eelworms can infect bulbs, too, leading to similar symptoms in the foliage, as well as yellowish swellings or specks on the undersides of leaves.

THE SOLUTION Remove affected plant parts as soon as you see them, and buy firm, healthy looking bulbs from reputable suppliers. There are no chemical controls.



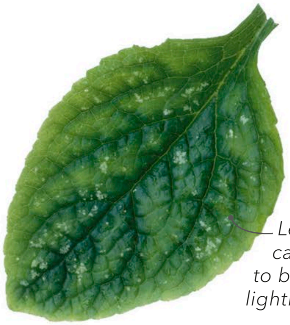
Eelworms cannot be seen by the naked eye; look for distorted yellow leaves instead



FUNGUS GNATS

THE PROBLEM Also known as sciarid flies, these greyish-brown insects grow up to 4mm (¼in). They are a nuisance, but do not generally eat live plants; they simply fly around them and run over the compost in seedtrays. Their larvae are white maggots with black heads, slightly larger than the adults, and feed on decaying leaves or roots, and occasionally seedlings, but rarely mature plants.

THE SOLUTION Use sticky traps to ensnare the flies, and a drench of the nematode *Steinernema feltiae* to control the larvae.



Leafhoppers cause leaves to become lightly mottled

LEAFHOPPER

THE PROBLEM These small, pale green insects are about 3mm (⅛in) long, and can jump from leaf to leaf, flying short distances when disturbed. The creamy white, wingless nymphs (juveniles) and their white cast skins can be easier to spot than the adults. Both cause a pale mottling on leaf surfaces, but the damage does not seriously affect the plant.

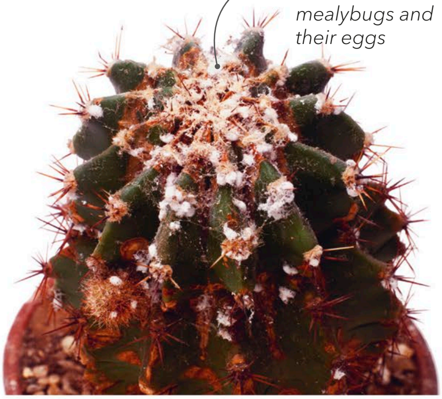
THE SOLUTION Leave the pest uncontrolled, as it rarely causes serious symptoms.

> *"Check your plants weekly and, if possible, pick off any insects you find."*

MEALYBUGS

THE PROBLEM These sap-sucking pests look like tiny white woodlice, and cause distorted or stunted growth. You will first notice a fluffy white substance in between the leaves and stems or under the foliage – the bugs or their orange-pink eggs are hiding beneath it. They also secrete honeydew, which can lead to sooty mould (see p215), and a few species attack the roots.

THE SOLUTION Often brought in on new plants, check for bugs before buying. Remove affected parts or apply dilute solutions of soap-based products or methylated spirits with a brush (test a small area first to check that it will not harm the plant). Or use pheromone lures to trap the adult males and disrupt breeding. Throw out badly infested plants; pesticides rarely work.

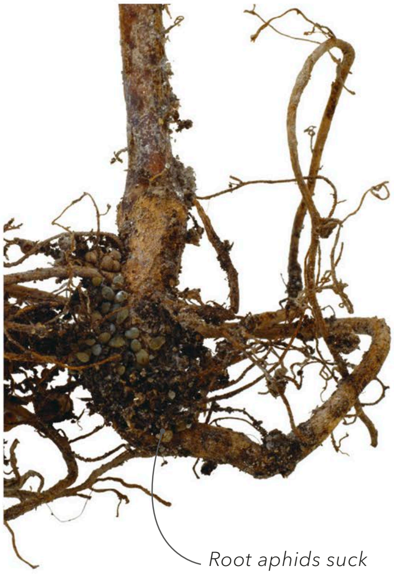


A fluffy white substance hides mealybugs and their eggs

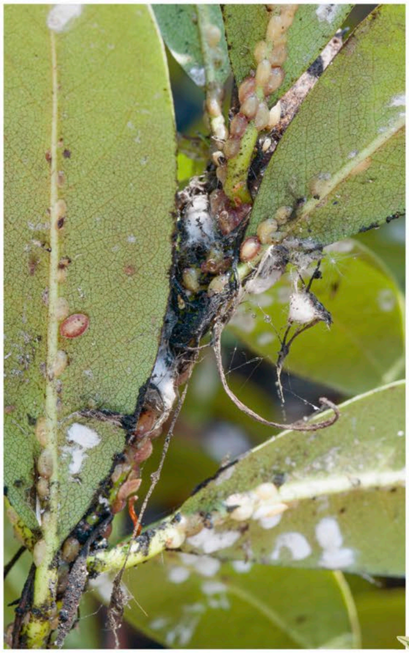
ROOT APHIDS

THE PROBLEM These aphids look like greenflies, and feed on plants' roots, sucking the sap from them, just like those that live above the soil. However, because they are hidden, you will notice the symptoms before the pests. Leaves will become stunted, wilt, and turn yellow as the insects destroy the roots.

THE SOLUTION If watering does not revive a wilting plant, check for root aphids in the soil. Try washing off the compost and aphids outside, then repot in fresh compost, as there is no chemical control.



Root aphids suck the moisture from roots, causing them to wither and die



SCALE INSECTS

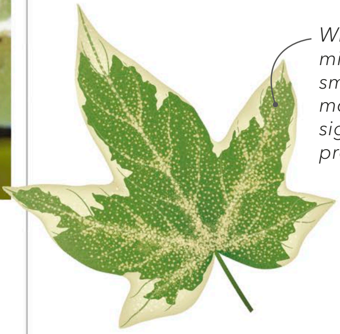
THE PROBLEM Scales or shell-like bumps up to 1cm (½in) in length appear on stems or beneath the leaves. You may also spot the white, waxy eggs. These sap-sucking insects cause distorted and weak growth, and secrete sugary honeydew, which can lead to the growth of sooty moulds (see p215).

THE SOLUTION Remove affected parts, or apply dilute solutions of soap-based products or methylated spirits with a paint brush (test a small area first to check that it will not harm the plant). Dispose of heavily infested plants.

SPIDER MITE

THE PROBLEM Also known as red spider mite, this tiny sap-sucking insect produces a mottled appearance on plant leaves. The foliage also loses its colour and may then fall off; heavy infestations can eventually kill the plant.

THE SOLUTION Remove and bin affected parts promptly; also bin severely infested plants to prevent the pest spreading. Misting plants regularly can reduce attacks, but may not eliminate the pest completely. You can also use a pesticide.



While spider mites are too small to see, mottled leaves signal their presence

SLUGS AND SNAILS

THE PROBLEM You will probably be familiar with these slimy molluscs, which eat holes in leaves and munch through stems. While they mostly affect outdoor plants, they can enter your home on new plants or through open windows.

THE SOLUTION You can normally see these pests on house plants, or find them lurking in their ornamental pots. Pick them off and dispose of them.

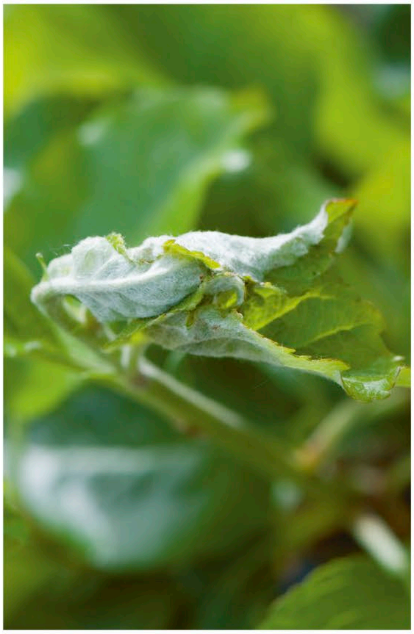
> *"Some pests are too small to see easily; check the plant for symptoms of infestation instead."*

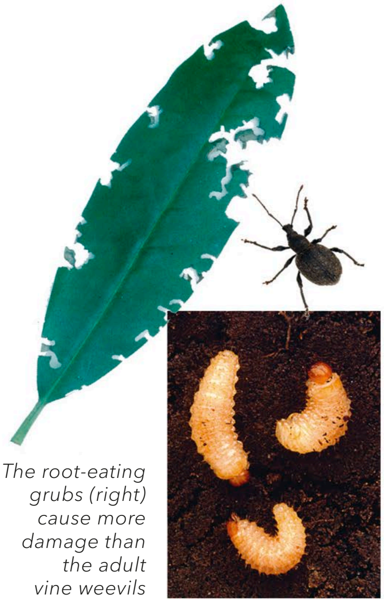
> *“Watch out for grubs and nymphs – these can often be just as bad, if not worse, as the adult pest.”*

CATERPILLARS

THE PROBLEM Not many house plants are affected by these pests; the most common indoors is the Tortrix moth caterpillar, which binds leaves together with fine webbing (below), causing them to dry up and turn brown, then fall off. Other caterpillars eat holes in the leaves, and you will see them usually lurking under the foliage.

THE SOLUTION Pick off caterpillars, or press the affected leaves together to kill the insects and pupae. For heavier infestations, use a pesticide that controls caterpillars; ventilate the room when applying it.





The root-eating grubs (right) cause more damage than the adult vine weevils

VINE WEEVILS

THE PROBLEM The adult black weevils are about 9mm (½in) long and easy to spot. They nibble leaves, making notches along the margins, but do little serious damage. The white, C-shaped, legless grubs with brown heads (about the same size as the adults) are the real problem because they eat the roots, causing plants to collapse and die.

THE SOLUTION Shake plants to dislodge the adults or trap them with sticky barriers around the outer pots. Try to catch the slow-moving weevils before they lay eggs in spring and summer. If you see the grubs, try hosing the roots outside to remove them, then repot in fresh compost, or apply the nematode *Steinernema kraussei* in autumn.

WHITEFLY

THE PROBLEM These white, winged, sap-sucking insects are easy to see, even though they are just under 2mm (1⁄16in) in length. Clouds of flies rise up when disturbed, and you may also spot the white, scale-like nymphs on the undersides of leaves. Whitefly causes distorted leaves and buds, and stunted growth. Both adults and nymphs excrete honeydew, which can lead to black sooty mould (see p215).

THE SOLUTION Hang sticky sheets near plants to trap the adults or spray the flies with a dilute soap-based solution, which prevents them from flying and disrupts breeding. Also try standing affected plants outside in summer where beneficial insects will help to control them, or use a pesticide.

INDEX

A

Abutilon × hybridum 116
Adiantum raddianum 126
Aechmea chantinii 102
  A. fasciata AGM 103
Aeonium haworthii 166
  A. 'Zwartkop' AGM 167
aerial roots, misting 185
Aeschynanthus pulcher 134
African daisy 119
African spear 158
African violet 123
Agave americana AGM 167
  A. Victoria-reginae 167
Aglaonema commutatum 146
air plants 40, 174–75, 185
  air plant stand 56–59
air purification, designing for 46–47
Alocasia × amazonica AGM 147
Aloe aristata 168
  A. vera AGM 168
aluminium plant 157
amaryllis 107, 198
Amazonian elephant's ear 147
Amazonian zebra plant 102
American aloe 167
Ananas comosus var. *variegatus* 103
angel's trumpet 117
Anthurium andraeanum AGM 117
Aphelandra squarrosa 147
aphids 216, 218
areca palm 132
Asparagus densiflorus 127
Aspidistra elatior AGM 147
Asplenium nidus AGM 127

B

bamboo palm 133
Barbados aloe 168
Beaucarnea recurvata AGM 130
Begonia 148, 202–203
benzene 46, 47
Billbergia nutans 104
bird of paradise 124
bird's nest fern 127
black aeonium 167
blackfly 216
blushing bromeliad 105
boat lily 160
Boston fern 128
Bougainvillea × buttiana 135
Brassia species 111
Brazilian coleus 157
bromeliads 102–105, 185
brown leaf tips 210
Brugmansia × candida 117
bulb eelworms 217
bulbous plants 106–109
bulbs, growing indoors 198–99
bunny ears cactus 165
busy lizzie 120
butterfly orchid 113
butterwort 144
button fern 129
buying house plants 178

C

cacti 162–65, 191
  Desertscape project 52–55
  watering 184, 185, 186
California pitcher plant 142
calla lily 109
cambria orchid 115
cape ivy 140
cape jasmine 118
cape primrose 125, 203
cape sundew 143
capillary matting 186
carnivorous plants 40, 142–45, 185, 191
Caryota mitis 131
cast iron plant 147
caterpillars 219
Cephalocereus senilis 162
Cereus forbesii 163
Ceropegia linearis subsp. *woodii* 135
Chamaedorea elegans 131
Chihuahua flower 170
China doll plant 158
Chinese evergreen 146
Chlorophytum comosum 135
Christmas cactus 165
Cissus rhombifolia AGM 136
climbing plants 38, 42, 134–41
  willow climbing frame 68–71
Clivia miniata AGM 106
Codiaeum variegatum 149
coleus 159
colour 11, 22–25, 31, 38
compost: choosing 190–91
  moisture levels 185
  waterlogged 192, 212
containers 30–35, 192–93
contrast: of colour 23, 25
  and harmony 13
  of scale 15, 16
  of shape 19, 21
  of texture 27, 28
Convallaria majalis AGM 107
Crassula ovata 168
Creeping fig 137
Cretan brake fern 129
crocodile fern 128
croton 149
crown rot 215
Cryptanthus bivittatus AGM 104
  C. zonatus 104
Ctenanthe burle-marxii 149
Curcuma alismatifolia 107
curled leaves 210
Cycas revoluta 132
Cymbidium species and hybrid 111

D

daffodils 108, 199
damping off 214
Darlingtonia californica 142
date palm, miniature 133
deadheading 194
delta maidenhair fern 126
Dendrobium nobile hybrids 112
Desertscape 52–55
devil's ivy 136
devil's tongue 164
Dieffenbachia seguine 150
Dionaea muscipula 143
diseases 178, 194, 210–19
Disocactus flagelliformis AGM 163
dividers, living space 92–95
dividing plants, propagating by 200, 205
donkey's tail 173
downy mildew 214
Dracaena fragrans 150
  D. marginata 150
dragon plant 150
drainage 178, 184, 192, 212
Drosera capensis 143
dry terrarium 84–87
dumb cane 150
dwarf umbrella tree 159
Dypsis lutescens 132

E

earth star 104
earwigs 217
Echeveria species 169
eelworms, stem and bulb 217
Epiphyllum anguliger 163
Epipremnum aureum AGM 136
eternal flame 153
Euphorbia species 170
Eustoma grandiflorum 118
Exacum affine AGM 118

F

false shamrock 109
Fatsia japonica 151
feeding 188–89, 212, 213
fern arum 161
ferns 126–29
Ferocactus latispinus AGM 164
fertilizer 188, 189
Ficus benjamina 151
  F. elastica 152
  F. lyrata AGM 152
  F. pumila 137
fiddle-leaf fig 152
fishbone cactus 163
fishtail palm 131
Fittonia 153
flaming Katy 171
flaming sword 105
florist's cineraria 122
flower bud fall 211
flower dust plant 171
flowering maple 116
flowering plants 116–25
flowers: encouraging 194
  lack of 211
foliage plants 146–61
formaldehyde 46, 47
foxtail fern 127
friendship plant 104
fungal leaf spot 214
fungus gnats 217
furry growths 211

G

Gardenia jasminoides AGM 118
geranium 122
Gerbera jamesonii 119
Goeppertia crocata AGM syn. *Calathea crocata* 153
  G. lancifolia syn. *Calathea lancifolia* 153
  G. makoyana syn. *Calathea makoyana* AGM 154
golden ball cactus 165
goosefoot plant 160
grape hyacinth 108
grape ivy 136
Graptopetalum bellum 170
greenfly 216
grey mould 215
grit and gravel 185, 191
grouping plants 187
Guzmania lingulata 105
Gynura aurantiaca 154

H

hanging plants 36, 42, 183
  macramé hanger 60–63
harmony: of colour 22, 24
  and contrast 13
  of scale 14, 16
  of shape 18, 20–21
  of texture 26, 28
Haworthia attenuata 'Striata' 171
healthy plants: golden rules for 212
  health checks 178
heart-leaf 139
hearts on a string 135
Hibiscus rosa-sinensis 119
Hippeastrum hybrids 107
holes in leaves 210
horticultural sand 191
houseleek 173
Howea forsteriana 132
Hoya species 137
Humata tyermanii 128
humidity: designing for 40–41
  raising humidity levels 187
Hyacinthus 108, 199
  H. orientalis 108
Hydrangea macrophylla 120
Hypoestes phyllostachya AGM 154

I

Impatiens 'New Guinea Group' 120
India rubber plant 152
Indian azalea 123

J

Japanese aralia 151
Jasminum polyanthum
Jerusalem cherry 124
Justicia brandegeeana AGM 120

K

Kalanchoe blossfeldiana AGM 171
  K. pumila 171
  K. tomentosa 172
kentia palm 132
kokedama 40
  kokedama fern 76–79

L

lace aloe 168
Lantana camara 121
large plants, caring for 193, 194
leafhoppers 217
leaves: cleaning 181
  pale leaves 192
  propagating from leaf cuttings 200, 200–203
  signs of pests and diseases 210–11
light 36–39, 180–81, 212
lily of the valley 107, 199
lipstick plant 134
Lithops species 172
living space divider 92–95
living stone 172

M

macramé hanger 60–63
Madagascar dragon tree 150
Mammillaria species 164
Mandevilla × *amoena* 'Alice du Pont' AGM 138
Maranta leuconeura var. *kerchoveana* 155
mealybugs 217
Medinilla magnifica 121
Microsorum musifolium 'Crocodyllus' 128
mildew 214
Miltoniopsis hybrids 112
mind-your-own-business 140
mindfulness, designing for 44
missionary plant 157
misting plants 185, 187
moisture levels 185
money tree 155
monkey cups 143
Monstera deliciosa 139
moonstones 172
mop-head hydrangea 120
mosaic plant 153
moss picture frame 80–83
moth orchid 114
mould 215
mulch 185
Muscari species 108

N

Narcissus species 108
natal lily 106
nature, as inspiration 12
Nelly Isler 113
Neoregelia carolinae f. *tricolor* 105

Nepenthes hybrids 143
Nephrolepis exaltata AGM 128
never-never-plant 149
nitrogen (N) 188
nobile dendrobium 112
North American pitcher plants 144–45
nutrients 188

O
offsets, propagating from 200, 206–207
old man cactus 162
Oncidium hybrids 113
Oncidopsis Nelly Isler gx 113
open bottle terrarium 64–67
Opuntia microdasys AGM 165
orchid cactus 163
orchids 110–15, 191
  how to make orchids reflower 196–97
  wood-mounted orchid 88–91
Oxalis triangularis 109

P
Pachira aquatica 155
Pachyphytum oviferum 172
painted leaf begonias 148
palms 130–33
panda plant 172
pansy orchid 112
paper flower 135
Paphiopedilum 'Maudiae Femma' 114
parlour palm 131
Parodia leninghausii AGM 165
Passiflora racemosa AGM 139
peace lily 124
peacock plant 154
peat 190
pebbles 38, 187
Pelargonium species 122
Pellaea rotundifolia AGM 129
Peperomia argyreia 156
  P. caperata 156
Pericallis Senetti Series 122
perlite 191
Persian violet 118
Peruvian apple cactus 163
pests 178, 210–19
Phalaenopsis hybrids 114–15
Philodendron scandens 139
  P. xanadu 156
Phoenix roebelenii AGM 133
phosphorus (P) 188
picture frame, moss 80-83
Pilea cadierei AGM 157
  P. peperomioides AGM 157
pincushion cactus 164
Pinguicula Mexican hybrids 144
pinwheel 166
pitcher plants: California pitcher plant 142
  North American pitcher plants 144–45
Platycerium bifurcatum AGM 129
Plectranthus oertendahlii AGM 157
polka dot plant 154
pollutants 46
pomegranate 122–23
pony tail palm 130
potassium (potash) (K) 188, 189
powdery mildew 214
prairie gentian 118
prayer plant 155
propagating plants 36, 200–209
  propagation shelf 96–99
pruning 194–95
Pteris cretica AGM 129
Punica granatum 122–23

Q
Queen Victoria century plant 167

R
rabbit's foot fern 128
Radermachera sinica AGM 158
radiator plant 156
rattlesnake plant 153
red passion flower
reddish leaves 210
repotting 192–93
Rhapis excelsa 133
Rhododendron simsii 123
root aphids 218
root-bound plants 178, 192
root rot 215
rose of China 119
rose grape 121
rot 185, 215
rust 215

S
sago palm 132
Saintpaulia cultivars 123
Sansevieria cylindrica 158
  S. trifasciata var. *laurentii* AGM 159
Sarracenia species and hybrids 142–43
scale 10, 14–17, 30
scale insects 218
scarlet star 105
Schefflera arboricola AGM 159
Schlumbergera × bridgesii 165
Sedum morganianum 173
seeds, propagating from 200, 208–209
Sempevivum species 173
Senecio macroglossus 'Variegatus' 140
  S. rowleyanus 140
senses, designing for the 44
shade 180, 181
shape 10, 18–21, 30, 194–95
shrimp plant 120
Siam tulip 107
silver-inch plant 141
silver jade plant 168
silver vase plant 103
size 10, 14–15
slipper orchid 114
slugs and snails 218
snake plants 159, 203
Solanum pseudocapsicum 124
Soleirolia soleirolii 140
Solenostemon scutellarioides hybrids 159
sooty mould 215
space, designing for 42–43
Spathiphyllum wallisii 124
sphagnum moss 191
spider mites 218
spider orchid 111
spider plant 135, 206, 207
spineless yucca 161
spots on leaves 211
staghorn ferm 129
stem cuttings, propagating from 200–201
stem eelworms 217
stem rot 215
Stephanotis floribunda 141
Strelitzia reginae 124
Streptocarpus hybrids 125
string of pearls 140
Stromanthe sanguinea 'Triostar' 160
succulents 166–73, 191
  Desertscape 52–55
  propagating 203
  succulent wreath 72–75
  watering 184, 185, 186
sudden leaf fall 211
sunlight 180, 181
Swiss cheese plant 139
Syngonium podophyllum AGM 160

T

tail flower 117
temperature 182–83, 212, 213
tender euphorbia 170
terrariums 32, 42
  dry terrarium 84–87
  open bottle terrarium 64–67
texture 11, 26–29, 31
thrips 216
thunder flies 216
Tillandsia 174–75
tool kit 179
Tradescantia spathacea 160
  T. zebrina 141
trailing plants 134–41

V

vanda orchid 115
variegated pineapple 103
variegated snake plant 159
velvet plant 154
Venus fly trap 143
vermiculite 191
vine weevils 219
viruses 178, 215
Vriesea splendens AGM 105
Vuylstekeara Cambria gx
    'Plush' 115

W

water: propagating with
    96–99 200, 204
  watering 184–87, 213
  waterlogging 192, 212
watermelon pepper 156
weeping fig 151
wellbeing, designing for 44–49
whitefly 219
wick systems 186
willow climbing frame 68–71
wilting 178, 192, 211
wood-mounted orchid 88–91
wreath, succulent 72–75

X

Xanadu philodendron 156

Y

yellow leaves 210
yellow sage 121
Yucca elephantipes AGM 161

Z

Zamioculcas zamiifolia 161
Zantedeschia species 109
zebra plant (bromeliad) 104
zebra plant (foliage plant) 147

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Fran Bailey would like to give a big thank you to Amy Slack and Philippa Nash at DK for their encouragement and support; to Nigel Wright and Rob Streeter whose vision and expertise really brought the projects to life; and to Katie Mitchell (@bymekatie) for her macramé expertise.

Zia Allaway would like to thank the whole team at DK for their dedication to the detail in producing this book, with particular thanks to editor Amy Slack for her support with the words and her infinite patience, and to Christine Keilty, Mandy Earey, and Philippa Nash for their beautiful designs. Thanks also to photographer Rob Streeter and stylists Nigel Wright and Janice Browne of XAB Design for the stunning images, and to Managing Editor, Stephanie Farrow for commissioning her and scrutinizing each page to ensure the quality was never compromised. And thanks to Christopher Young of the Royal Horticultural Society for his editorial input and fact checks. Last but not least, a huge thank you to her husband Brian North and son Callum Allaway North for their patience and support while she was writing this book.

DK would like to thank Julie Aylett, Kathy Sanger, Sue Unwin, and Irene Morris at Aylett Nurseries for their endless advice and assistance in sourcing plants; Jamie Song, John Bassam, and Jo for the hire of their homes; Jan Browne at XAB Design for behind-the-scenes help with co-ordinating photoshoots; Rosamund Cox and Emma Pinckard for editorial assistance; and Vanessa Bird for indexing.

DK would also like to thank the following for their kind permission to reproduce their photographs:

(Key: a-above; b-below/bottom; c-centre; f-far; l-left; r-right; t-top)

GAP Photos: 33tc, Martin Hughes-Jones 33tr, Dianna Jazwinski 45br, Lynn Keddie 21bl, Howard Rice 36br, Friedrich Strauss 17tr, 17bl, 29tl, 29ftl, 33bl, 37bl, Visions 20br.
All other images © Dorling Kindersley
For further information see: **www.dkimages.com**

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Fran Bailey grew up on a cut flower nursery near York, where her Dutch father Jacob Verhoef encouraged her love of all things horticultural. After studying at the Welsh College Of Horticulture, she moved to London to work as a freelance florist. In 2006 she opened her first flower shop, The Fresh Flower Company, in South London. In 2013 she expanded into house plants with the opening of her shop Forest, which she runs with her daughters, and which is packed to the rafters with lush greenery.

Zia Allaway is an author, journalist, and qualified horticulturist who has written and edited a range of gardening books for the RHS and DK, including the *RHS Encyclopedia of Plants and Flowers*, *RHS How to Grow Plants in Pots*, and *Indoor Edible Garden*. Zia also writes a monthly column on garden design for *Homes and Gardens* magazine and is a contributor to the *Garden Design Journal*. She runs a consultancy service from her home in Hertfordshire and offers practical workshops for beginners.

Christopher Young is the horticultural team leader of the Glasshouse at RHS Wisley, the Royal Horticultural Society's flagship garden in Surrey. He is a passionate plantsman with a particular interest in exotics and ferns, and is also a member of the RHS Tender Ornamental Plant Committee.

The Royal Horticultural Society is the UK's leading gardening charity dedicated to advancing horticulture and promoting good gardening. Its charitable work includes providing expert advice and information, training the next generation of gardeners, creating hands-on opportunities for children to grow plants and conducting research into plants, pests and environmental issues affecting gardeners.

For more information visit **www.rhs.org.uk**
or call **020 3176 5800**.

Editor Amy Slack
Designers Philippa Nash
with Mandy Earey, Lee-may Lim
Senior jacket creative Nicola Powling
Pre-production manager Sunil Sharma
DTP designer Rajdeep Singh
Producer, pre-production Robert Dunn
Senior producer Stephanie McConnell
Managing editor Stephanie Farrow
Managing art editor Christine Keilty
Art director Maxine Pedliham
Publisher Mary-Clare Jerram

Photographer Rob Streeter
Photographic art director Nigel Wright

ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY
House plant consultant Christopher Young
Editor Simon Maughan
Publisher Rae Spencer-Jones
Head of editorial Chris Young

First published in Great Britain in 2018 by
Dorling Kindersley Limited
80 Strand, London, WC2R 0RL

Copyright © 2018 Dorling Kindersley Limited
A Penguin Random House Company
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
001–308068–Mar/2018

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise), without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

A CIP catalogue record for this book
is available from the British Library.
ISBN: 978-0-2413-1759-4

Printed and bound in China

A WORLD OF IDEAS:
SEE ALL THERE IS TO KNOW

www.dk.com